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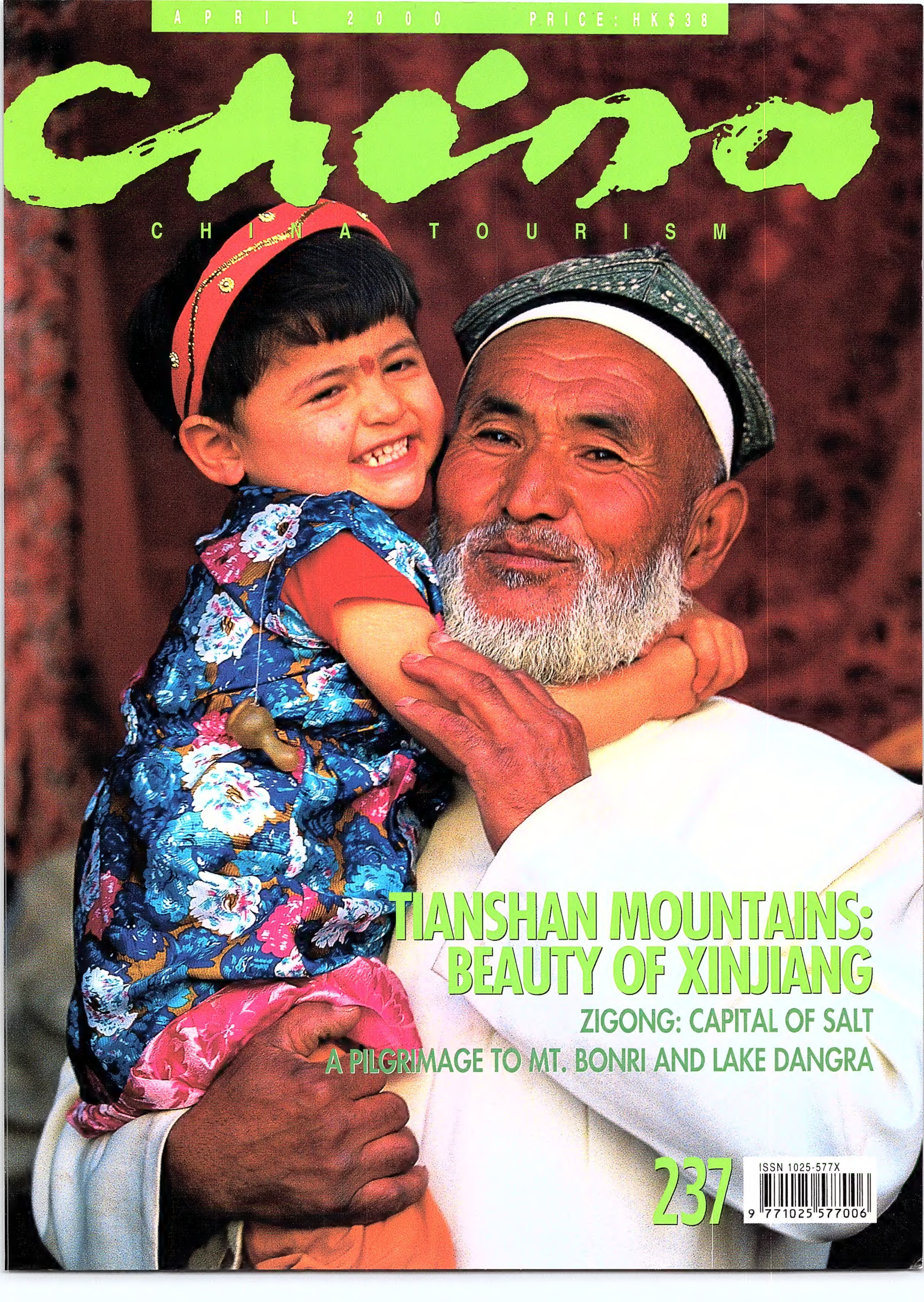

TIANSHAN MOUNTAINS: BEAUTY OF XINJIANG

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A PILGRIMAGE TO MT. BONRI AND LAKE DANGRA

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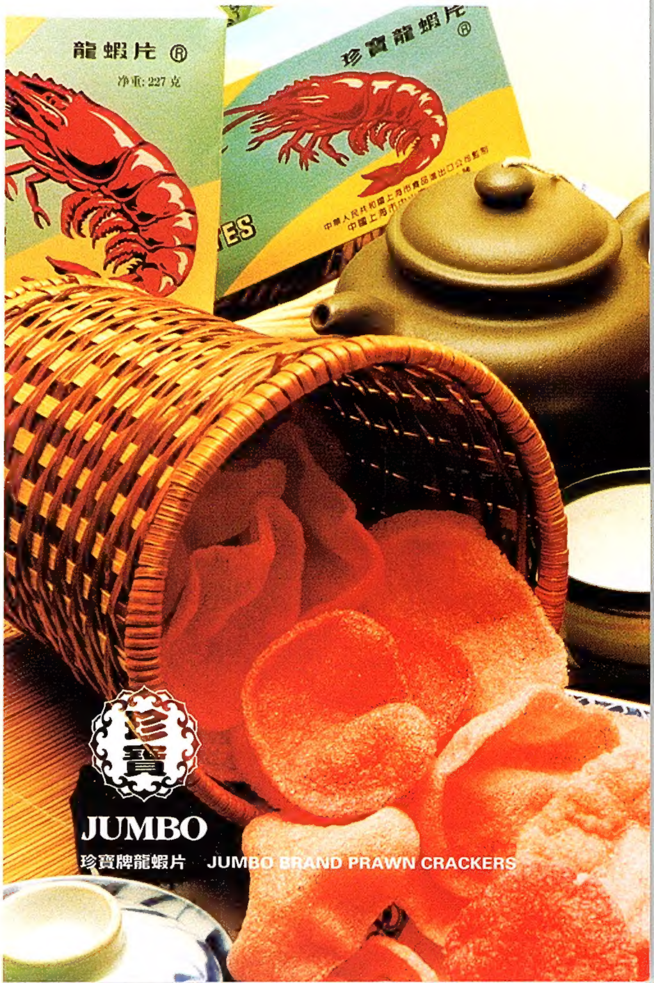
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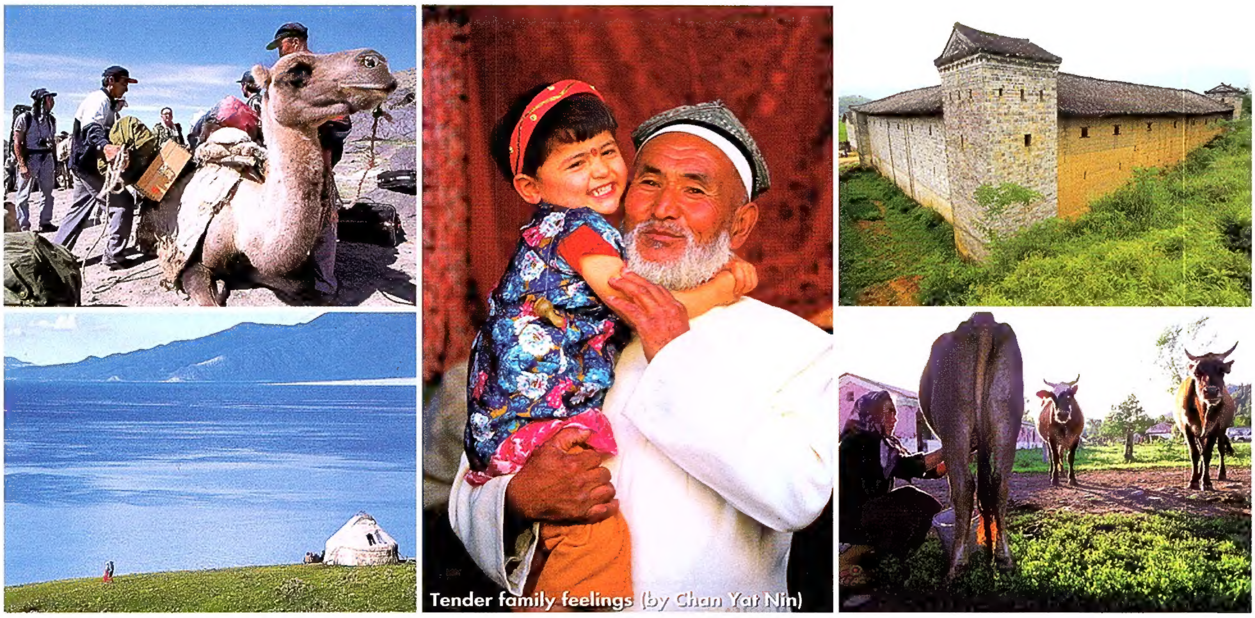
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Photos & article by Xie Guanghui

A great part of Xinjiang's charm lies in the Tianshan Mountains, which stand as a screen wall dividing the region into the northern and southern parts. Following our reporter, you will see the vigorous city of Urümqi, capital of the Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region at the northern foot of the Tianshan Mountains; the imposing Bogda Peak and the picturesque Tianchi Lake; the blue and serene Sayram Lake; the Künes Grassland, home of the Xinjiang sheep and Tianma horse; and Dabancheng, where Asia's largest anemo-power station has been built.

Further attractions await you in Xinjiang, which include the historical sites and cultural relics on the Silk Road, the border cities of Kashi and Altay, the Taklimakan Desert, and Turpan, which is famous for its vineyard.

On the Way

50 Fort-like Dwellings in Anyuan

Photos & article by Huang Yanhong

In Anyuan County, Jiangxi Province, some old fort-like residential buildings can still be found. Built with bricks or rammed earth, these dwellings are where clans once lived together. As most residents have now moved out, and many buildings have been left to collapse, there is an awareness that this unique architectural style of dwellings, together with the traditional life-style of their residents, will soon vanish.

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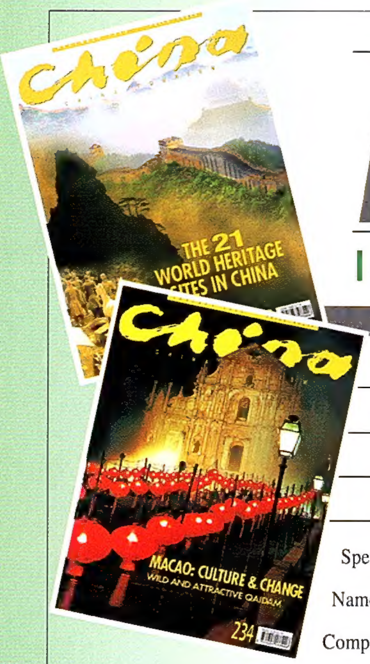
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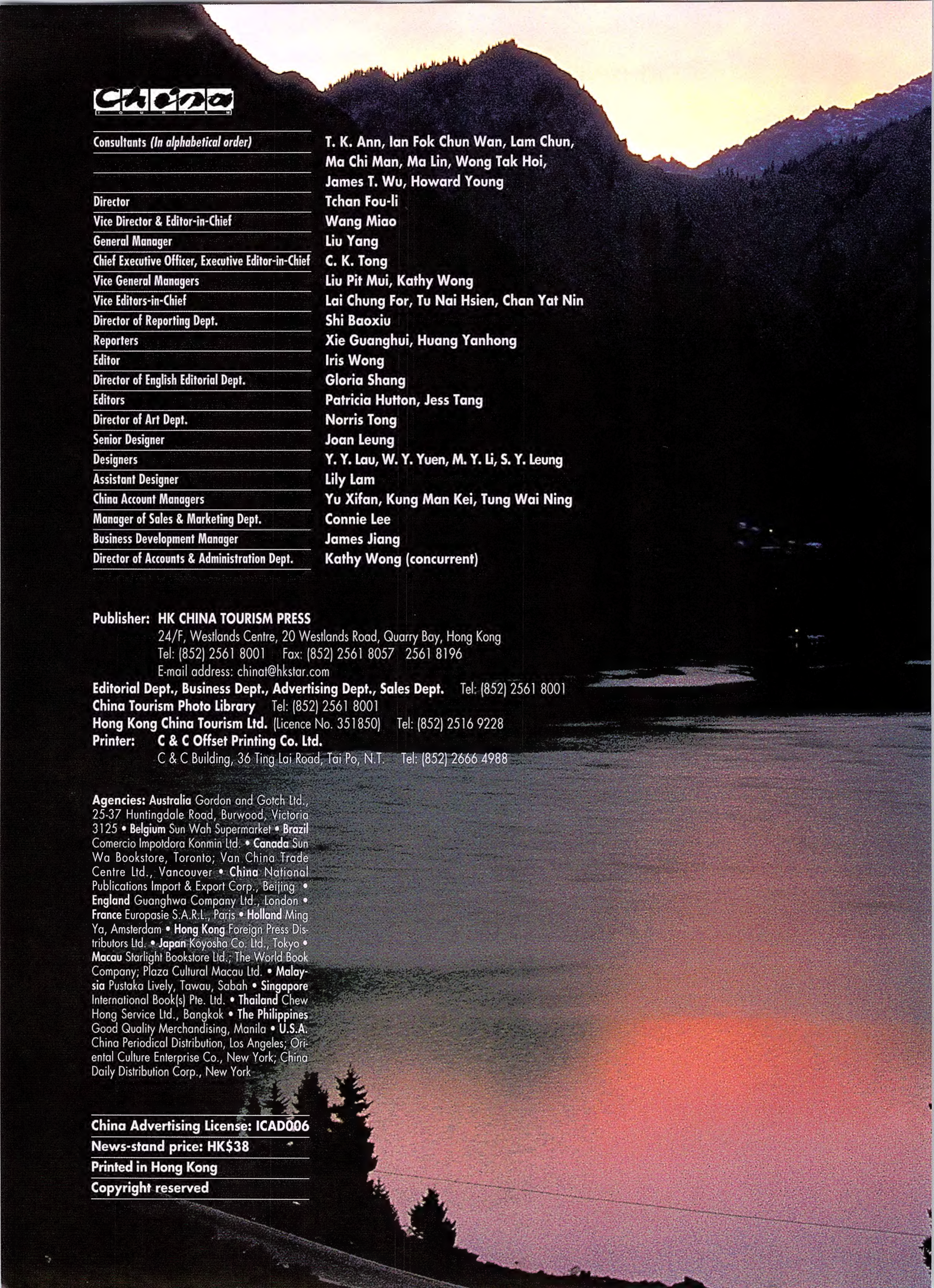

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Publisher: HK CHINA TOURISM PRESS
24/F, Westlands Centre, 20 Westlands Road, Quarry Bay, Hong Kong
Tel: (852) 2561 8001 Fax: (852) 2561 8057 2561 8196
E-mail address: chinat@hkstar.com
Editorial Dept., Business Dept., Advertising Dept., Sales Dept. Tel: (852) 2561 8001
China Tourism Photo Library Tel: (852) 2561 8001
Hong Kong China Tourism Ltd. (Licence No. 351850) Tel: (852) 2516 9228
Printer: C & C Offset Printing Co. Ltd.
C & C Building, 36 Ting Lai Road, Tai Po, N.T. Tel: (852) 2666 4988

Agencies: Australia Gordon and Gotch Ltd., 25-37 Huntingdale Road, Burwood, Victoria 3125 • **Belgium** Sun Wah Supermarket • **Brazil** Comercio Impotdora Konmin Ltd. • **Canada** Sun Wa Bookstore, Toronto; Van China Trade Centre Ltd., Vancouver • **China** National Publications Import & Export Corp., Beijing • **England** Guanghwa Company Ltd., London • **France** Europasie S.A.R.L., Paris • **Holland** Ming Ya, Amsterdam • **Hong Kong** Foreign Press Distributors Ltd. • **Japan** Koyosha Co. Ltd., Tokyo • **Macau** Starlight Bookstore Ltd.; The World Book Company; Plaza Cultural Macau Ltd. • **Malaysia** Pustaka Lively, Tawau, Sabah • **Singapore** International Book(s) Pte. Ltd. • **Thailand** Chew Hong Service Ltd., Bangkok • **The Philippines** Good Quality Merchandising, Manila • **U.S.A.** China Periodical Distribution, Los Angeles; Oriental Culture Enterprise Co., New York; China Daily Distribution Corp., New York

China Advertising License: ICAD006
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FROM THE EDITOR

Touring China in Spring

With its kaleidoscopic topographical features, charming scenery and colourful ethnic customs, Xinjiang is a travel destination that will never let you down. In the feature story in this issue, we lead you to the snow-capped Tianshan Mountains, the natural screen dividing northern and southern Xinjiang. In this area, you will experience the magical allure of the Xinjiang Autonomous Region. The different faces of this beautiful land are unveiled in the story — the energetic capital city of Urümqi, the precipitous Bogda Peak, the serene Sayram Lake, the heavenly Tianchi Lake, the extensive Künes Grassland, and Dabancheng, where Asia's largest anemo-electric plant is founded...

In Tibet, a Swiss scholar specialised in Asia's cultural studies trekked deep into the mysterious snow land on pilgrimages to Mount Bonri and Lake Dangra, two holy sites of the Bon, the native religion of Tibet. On his journey, he visited monasteries and talked to Bonpo monks, through which, he learned more of this religion as well as the customs of the local Tibetans. In his informative and interesting account, the author shares with us his unique experience and his knowledge on the culture that he has studied for years.

In Sichuan there is the city of Zigong which is renowned for being the home of salt. The deep-well drilling technology created by the Zigong people is considered as China's fifth greatest invention. Whereas in Anyuan County, Jiangxi Province, you can find the ancient rural residences — enclosures built with bricks or rammed earth. A visit to these particular dwellings is a golden opportunity to learn more about China's history.

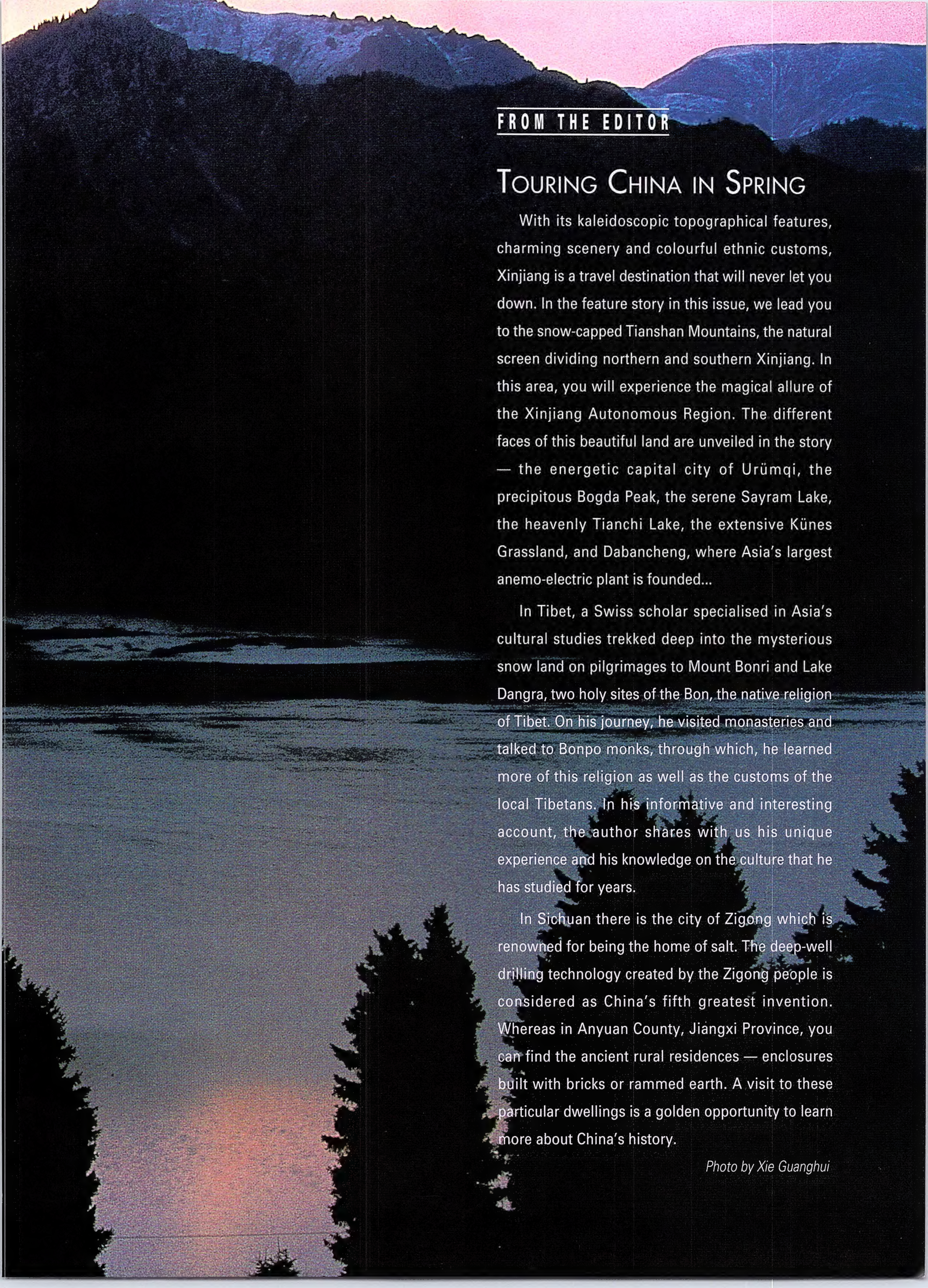


Photo by Xie Guanghui

Volcano Park Opens in Yunnan

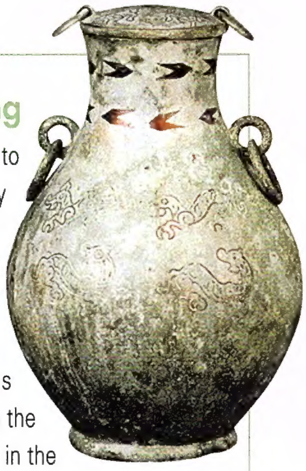
Tengchong, a remote area in Southwest China's Yunnan Province, bordering the neighbouring country, Myanmar, is rich in geothermal resources. With many volcanoes within its boundary, the county has opened a volcano park, which includes eight groups of volcanoes featuring lakes and ravines formed by lava flows. The volcanoes in Tengchong are among the world's youngest volcanoes. The Tengchong Volcano Park is considered as a museum of volcanic geology by scientists.

Visa-Free Policy, Shanghai

The municipal government of Shanghai has adopted a flexible policy on visas for visitors to the city. Since January 1 this year, all overseas visitors to Shanghai, arriving at either the Pudong International Airport or the Hongqiao International Airport, may stay for up to 24 hours without having a visa. Travellers from some countries, including Japan, the Republic of Korea, Singapore, the United States, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, Germany, France, the Netherlands, Luxembourg, Belgium, Portugal, Spain, Italy, Austria and Greece, may stay for up to 48 hours visa-free. No extra fee is charged for undergoing the visa-free procedures.

Within the time limits, these visitors are free to tour Shanghai's neighbouring areas, such as Hangzhou in Zhejiang and Suzhou in Jiangsu. The plan will benefit transit passengers who have to shuffle between the two airports. Meanwhile, the two Shanghai airports have both simplified their visa issuance procedures, and visas will be issued to those travel groups organised by authorised Shanghai-based international travel agencies.

Website Offers History Tour, Beijing



Scholars, historians and tourists who cannot find time to go to Beijing can easily visit the Chinese capital's history museum through the Internet. The National Museum of Chinese History has opened its website at www.nmch.gov.cn and is available in simplified Chinese, traditional Chinese and English.

Over 80 years of accumulation, the museum has collected more than 300,000 items or sets. After choosing the language, the visitor can select from dozens of categories in the menu. By clicking the "Bronze", for example, one can visit items such as the bronze *hu* inlaid with copper bird and beast designs. Each item is shown with a colour picture and a brief introduction. As illustrated here, this bronze *hu*, 32 cm in height, was a relic of the Spring and Autumn Period. It was excavated from the Jiyu Village in Hunyuan County, Shanxi Province. Hunyuan was the site of ancient Dai, a state which was established by a northern tribe in the late Spring and Autumn Period and conquered by the state of Zhao in the early years of the Warring States Period. The numerous other categories include iron ware, pottery, ancient books, documents, coins, musical instruments and so on.

Wild Cycad Forest, Sichuan

Scientists of China have made a major breakthrough in breeding wild cycad, a 280-million-year-old rare plant species. Cycad provides ample material for studying the origin and evolution of living things and the climate and geography of ancient times.

A cycad forest covering 1,360 hectares of land has been grown in the suburbs of Panzhihua in Southwest China's Sichuan Province. This is believed to be the largest wild cycad forest in the world, with 237,766 cycad plants. Cycad is a tropical or subtropical plant with no branches but a crown of fern-like leaves. China is endowed with 15 kinds of cycad, a plant species dating back to the Palaeozoic era, before the age of the dinosaurs.

Ancient Porcelain Found in Sichuan

A jar found in Sichuan 12 years ago was recently identified as the oldest Qinghua, or Blue-and-White, porcelain so far found in China. The double-eared jar has a lid and is about 30 cm tall and 20 cm in diameter at its broadest part. Its glaze is highly refined with the feel of jade. Written on the central body of the jar is "made in the 7th year of the Zhizheng reign", the year 1347, near the end of the Yuan Dynasty. The characters are written with a blue pigment which archaeologists have found to contain cobalt, the determinant factor for blue-and-white ceramics.

The precious jar was excavated in kiln ruins of the Ya'an area in western Sichuan Province and had been stored in a warehouse. No one had realised its value until it was discovered by experts from the provincial museum who were looking for items for an relics exhibition.

Giant Jade Boulder, Liaoning

A gigantic jade boulder, weighing more than 60,000 tons, has been discovered in Xiuyan County in Northeast China's Liaoning Province. Xiuyan is the producer of Xiuyan jade, which is famed for its fine texture. The county provides 80 percent of the raw materials for jade crafts made in China.

The local government decided to carve Buddha figurines on this huge jade and build a park centred around it.

Tomb Museum in Jiuquan, Gansu

A rare kind of museum, the Jiuquan Tomb Museum, has been built and will open to public in the near future. Ancient tombs of high artistic value will be moved to the museum so that their murals, painted bricks, architecture and burial articles can be displayed.

Jiuquan lies at the west end of the Hexi Corridor on the ancient Silk Road. During the Western Han Dynasty (206 B.C.-A.D. 220) fortresses were built and people from the Central Plains were moved there to guard the border. More than 250 sites of intact tombs have been found there, dating from the Neolithic Age to the Qing Dynasty (1644-1911). These tombs provide rich references on the history, culture and social development of the area.

More Dinosaur Fossils Found in Yunnan

Lufeng County in Southwest China's Yunnan Province is known as home of dinosaurs. Now a new batch of dinosaur fossils have again been discovered in this county. Eight heads of dinosaurs can be seen, with the biggest as long as 18 metres. It is believed that these giant fossils were from dinosaurs who lived on earth about 160 million years ago.

Agricultural High-Tech Zone, Zhejiang

East China's Zhejiang Province is preparing to establish an agricultural high-tech demonstration zone, which will aim at boosting advanced technology in the agricultural sector.

The 333-hectare zone will focus on planting trans-genetic crops and breeding quality seeds and seedlings. It will be co-financed by the Zhejiang Provincial Agricultural Department, Zhejiang University and several other organisations. It will open to domestic and overseas agricultural technical research institutes.

Cathay Pacific Leases New Airbus, Hong Kong

The Hong Kong based Cathay Pacific Airway has leased a new Airbus A340-300 from the International Lease Finance Corp (ILFC) for five years from January 2001 with an option to extend. The new aircraft has now increased the number of the airline's Airbus A340-300s to 15.

Cathay Pacific currently operates a fleet of 62 aircraft, including Boeing and Airbus models. The ILFC, a wholly-owned subsidiary of American International Group Inc., specialises in leasing and re-marketing commercial jet aircraft to airlines around the world.

Internet Users Hit 8.9 Million in China

The number of Internet users in China has more than doubled in the last six months of last year to hit 8.9 million, according to the official statistics.

The report released by the China Internet Network Information Centre was based on 202,432 valid online paper interviews during December 15-31, 1999. The number of websites in China totalled 15,153 at the end of last year, compared to 9,906 at the end of June.

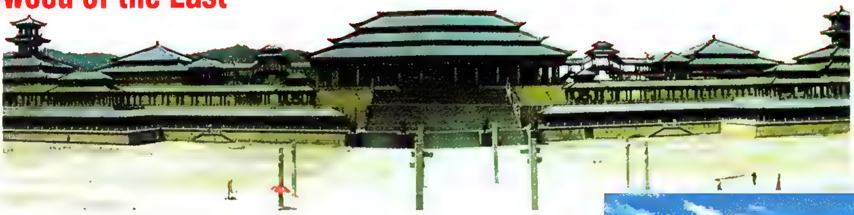
The report shows that the proportion of women Internet users has increased by six percent to reach 21 percent of the total number of users. Young people form the biggest group of users: 42.8 percent are between 18 and 24; 32.8 percent between 25-30. Unmarried people account for 64 percent of the total Internet users. Users with bachelor's and higher degrees account for 45 percent. The average time spent on the Internet each week is 17 hours.

Over half the users expressed most dissatisfaction with the low connection speed, followed by high charges.

Recommendation

Hengdian Film and TV City — Hollywood of the East

Zhejiang Hengdian Town in Dongyang City, Zhejiang Province, has become a key sightseeing spot in southern China due to the presence of Asia's largest film and TV studio set there. The Hengdian Film and TV City, designated "Hollywood of the East", is composed of eight studios, a training centre for actors and actresses and a hotel.



The Guangzhou Street is a recreation of Guangzhou in the 19th century. Built especially for the shooting of the historical epic The Opium War, this studio of 21 hectares has an imitation "Pearl River", gurgling streams, and streets lined with opium dens, brothels, wine shops, gambling houses, pawnshops and sundry goods shops.

The 20,000-square-metre Dazhi Temple consisting of several palaces and halls is the site for filming kungfu movies. A 28.88-metre-tall Buddha statue of flamboyant manner is enshrined in the main hall. Behind the temple is the Guardian Warrior Pagoda. The top of the pagoda commands a panoramic view of the entire Hengdian Town.

Pingyan is a place famous for its peculiar rocks and caves. Its extraordinary topography, together with its dense vegetation, gives rise to some perfect hiding-places, making it an ideal location for gunfight scenes.

The Hong Kong site, eight hectares large, is an epitome of Hong Kong during the period from 1841 till the end of the 19th century. The over 30 European-style buildings standing on its streets stimulate a nostalgic ambience.

Another site, modelled and named after the Song-dynasty painting *Qingming Festival at the Riverside*, occupies an area of 162,500 square metres. Inside are 120 quaint old-style houses complete with piers, archways, pavilions and wells. Willows lining the riverbanks add a poetic air to the picturesque scenery.

The Qin Palace Studio, 53 hectares large, is the set of the movie *Jing Ke Assassinates the King of Qin*. The palace of the Qin State and the Huayang Terrace, two major sites in the studio, are composed of imposing architecture, presenting an exceptionally majestic picture.

Ming and Qing Dynasties Street, 80 hectares large, has buildings characterised with round pillars, long corridors, white walls, black tiles and flying eaves, which create the rich cultural atmosphere of these two dynasties.

A village of ancient residences is located in the Chayuan (Tea Garden) Mountain area, hugged by green mountains. Wooden houses standing by the ponds present a scene of an ancient and serene farming village.

Scenic Spot

Xiangong Mountain in Fujian: A New Tourist Attraction

Fujian Renowned for its expanse, tranquillity and "celestial" beauty, Xiangong (Immortal) Mountain in Majia Town, in the northern suburbs of Quanzhou, Fujian Province, has emerged as a popular travel destination. It attracts an increasing number of tourists, including Fujian natives living abroad and pilgrims from Southeast Asia. In 1999, more than 300,000 tourists visited Xiangong Mountain.

Xiangong Mountain is particularly imposing with winding mountain paths and dense forests. Its scenic wonders include Banshan Cave, Baishui Rock, Chaotian Pavilion and Jiutian Heavenly Gate. Literati of different dynasties, such as the Song-dynasty Zhu Xi and Wang Shipeng, and the Ming-dynasty Zhang Ruitu, had left behind quite a number of cliff carvings there. The Taoist temple on the mountain's summit is often thronged with pilgrims.

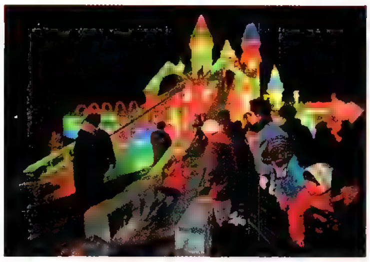
Over the past years, Majia Town and the management office of Xiangong Mountain Scenic Area have been making efforts to improve the area's tourist facilities. For example, a cableway has been built, making the ascent of the mountain a pleasant experience.

Just like many other temples in Fujian, the temple on Xiangong Mountain is dedicated to the Nine Immortals of the He clan. There are sister temples of Xiangong Temple in Taiwan too. Religious and academic exchanges are often organised among these temples.

A plan for further development of this area has been worked out. As part of the plan, a 200-hectare forest park will be created and holiday villas constructed with facilities for recreation and tourist programmes.

Scenic Spot

An Ice Sculpture City in Altay



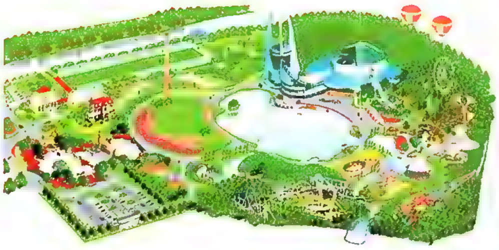
Xinjiang Altay in northern Xinjiang is a city with beautiful mountains and forests. The Altay area, at 45° North latitude, has a five-month-long winter. During this season, the place is covered in thick snow and glaciers can be found in its suburbs. Now, with its newly finished Ice Sculpture City, it has become an even more attractive destination for tourists.

Over 2,000 ice sculptures are on display in the Ice Sculpture City. The highlights among these icy art works are the 340-metre-long Great Wall and the 400-metre-long rime scenery. The theme area is located in the Binhe (Riverside) Square. The main streets in that area are also decorated with ice sculptures.

News

War Game Training Ground in Nanhai Hotel

Shenzhen Apart from renovating its conference rooms, the five-star Nanhai Hotel in Shekou, Shenzhen, has also added a war game training ground recently. Found in the hotel's garden, the training ground, 2,700 square metres, is an ideal venue for all kinds of war games. In recent years, Nanhai Hotel has included war game training as part of its staff training programme to help boost the staff's morale. Now the hotel also launches specially designed training programmes for companies and organisations to enhance their staff's esprit de corps, and skills for leadership and handling crises.



News

Touring the Dragon City in the Year of Dragon

Jiangsu Year 2000 happens to be the Year of Dagon. Changzhou in Jiangsu Province, also called the Dragon City, is welcoming this auspicious year with a series of activities focused on this legendary creature. With the programme, Travel the Dragon City in the Year of Dragon, Changzhou is launching four distinguished tours. The first, focussed on beautiful landscapes, features Maoshan Hill, Tianmu Lake and many other natural scenic spots; the second route includes ancient temples, pagodas and the Grand Canal; the third, featuring famous persons and places, brings tourists to visit the Liu Haisu Arts Museum, Qu Qiubai Memorial House, and other places that either relate to Changzhou's outstanding figures or history and culture; and the fourth route focuses on the Dragon City itself, including the relics of the Yancheng City of the Spring and Autumn Period and the China Dinosaurs Park.

Changzhou Tourism Bureau has also arranged some gala activities to help promote the tours:

1. The bell tolling in the ancient Tianning Temple (city proper)
2. Maoshan Mountain Climbing Festival (March 18-May 8, Jintan)
3. The Tianmu Lake Beer Festival (July-August, Liyang)
4. Tianmu Lake Writers' Meeting (May, Liyang)
5. Photography Contest at Tianmu Lake (May, Liyang)
6. Changzhou Tourism Festival Activities (September-October)
    * Opening ceremony of the China Dinosaurs Park (city proper)
    * Great Evening Party (city proper)
    * International Dinosaurs Symposium (city proper)
    * Changzhou Tourism Exposition (city proper)
    * Quiz on dinosaurs (city proper)
    * Thousand people touring the Dragon City on bicycles (city proper)
    * Dragon Dance Competition (Wujin)
    * International Motorboat Competition (Liyang)
    * Longshan Mountain Fishing Festival (September-October, Jintan)
    * Tourism exposition of Changzhou and the surrounding areas

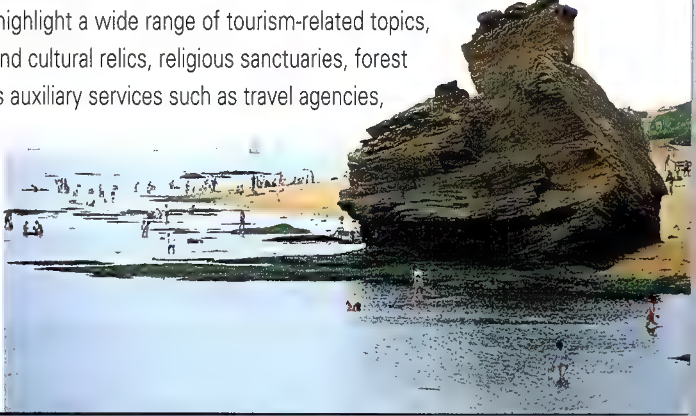
Exhibition

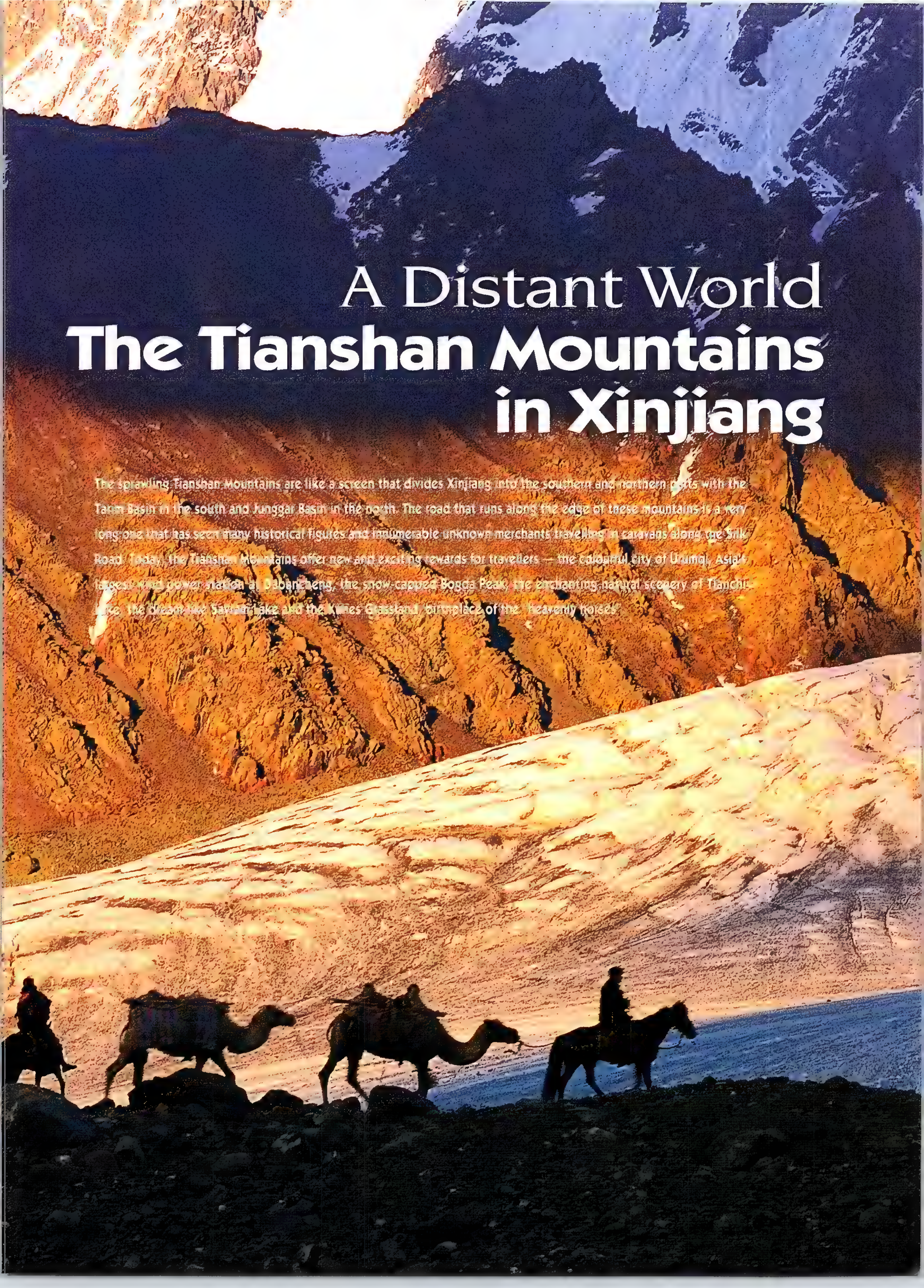
The First China Scenic Areas and Tourist Resorts Expo Opens in April in Dalian

Liaoning The 2000 China Scenic Areas and Tourist Resorts Expo is scheduled to take place from April 21 to 23 in Dalian's Xinghai Exhibition Centre.

An international event, the 2000 China Scenic Areas and Tourist Resorts Expo will highlight a wide range of tourism-related topics, including the world's famous tourist resorts, scenic attractions, tourist cities, historical and cultural relics, religious sanctuaries, forest parks, botanical and zoological reserves, theme parks, entertainment facilities, as well as auxiliary services such as travel agencies, hotels, air/land/sea transport, handicrafts and souvenirs, and hotel facilities.

A great attraction for tourists, the expo will become a rendezvous for worldwide representatives of tourism authorities, travel agencies, conference centres, hotels and transport companies.

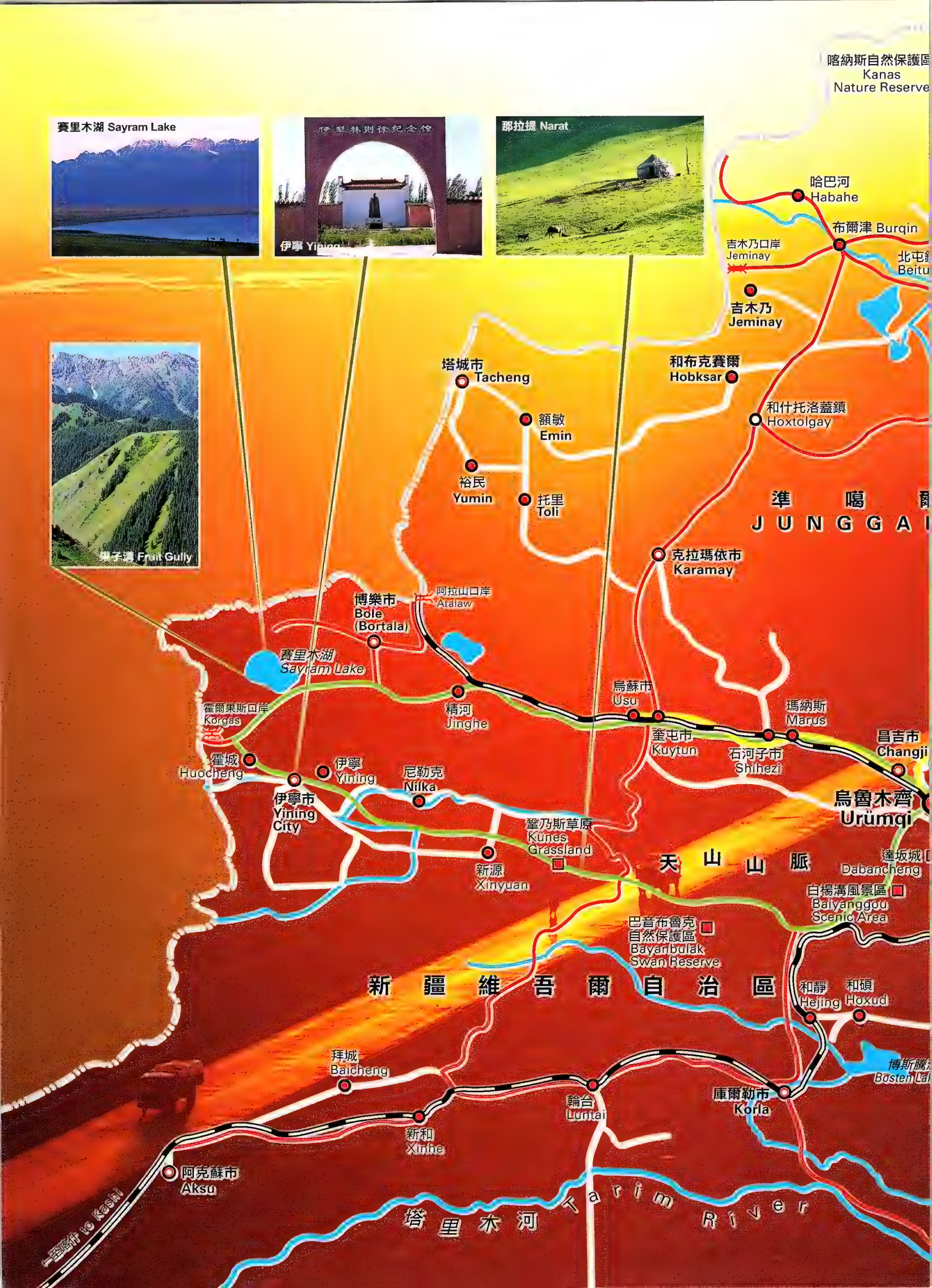




A Distant World

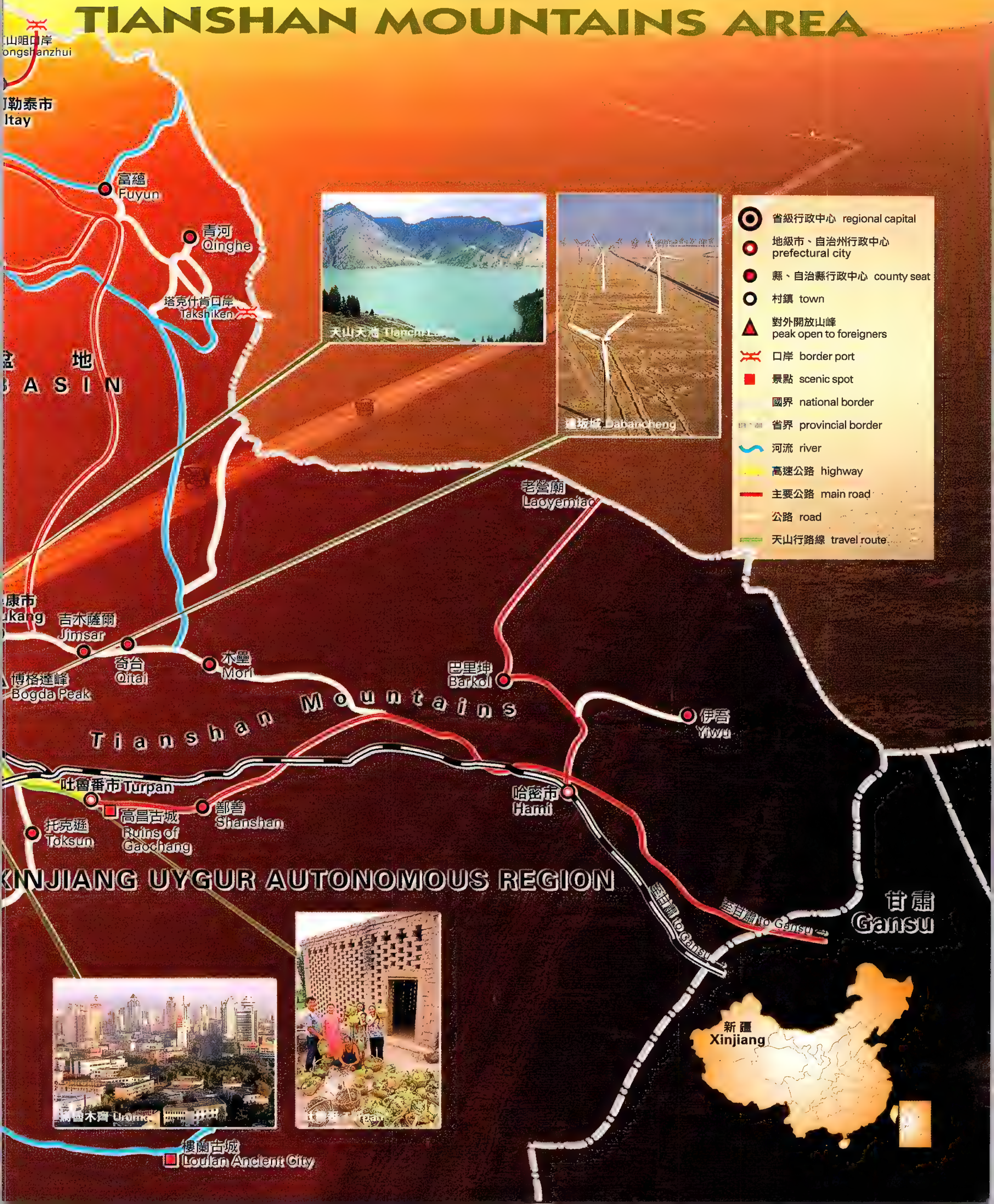
The Tianshan Mountains in Xinjiang

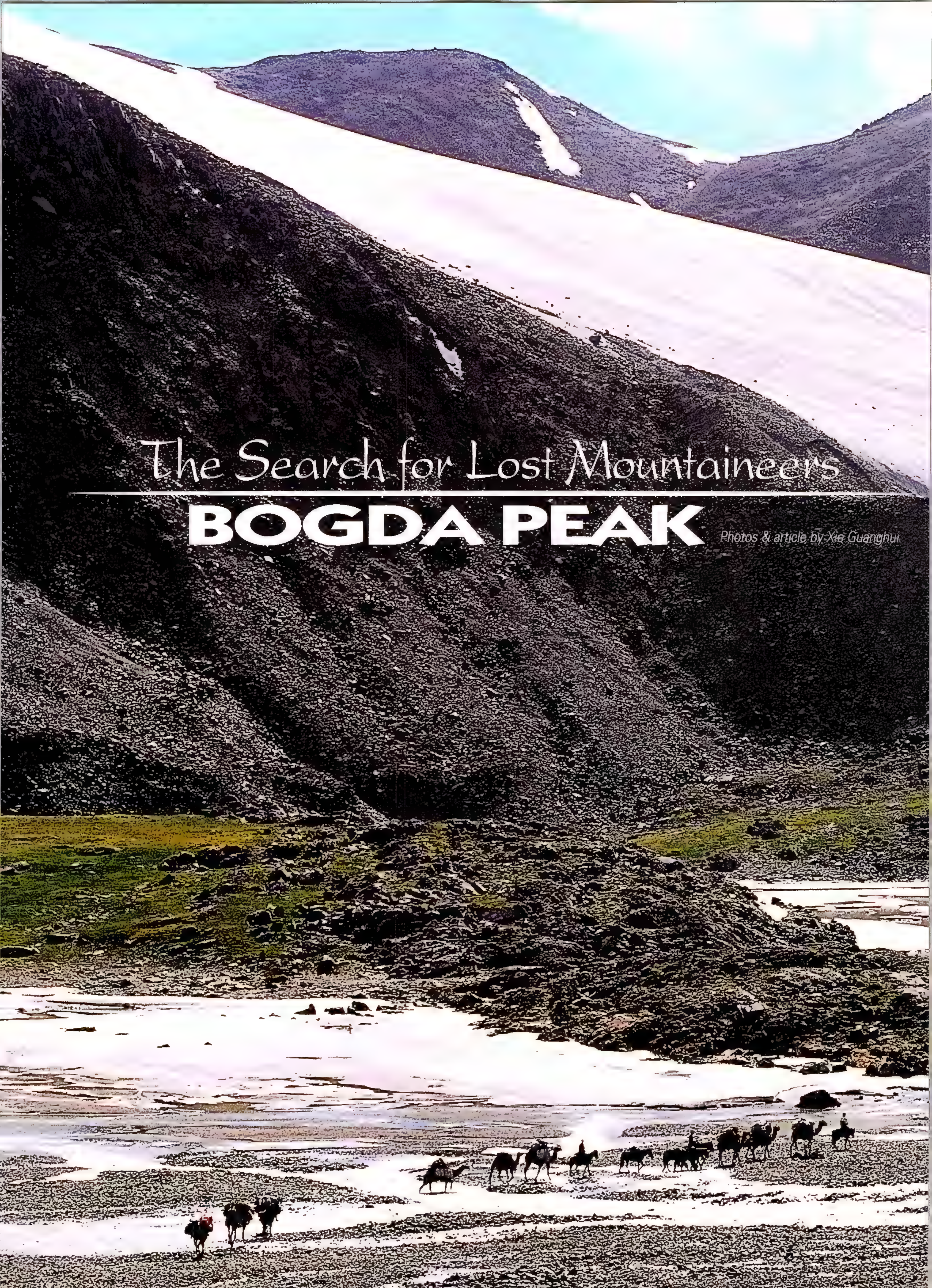
The sprawling Tianshan Mountains are like a screen that divides Xinjiang into the southern and northern parts with the Tarim Basin in the south and Junggar Basin in the north. The road that runs along the edge of these mountains is a very long one that has seen many historical figures and innumerable unknown merchants travelling in caravans along the Silk Road. Today, the Tianshan Mountains offer new and exciting rewards for travellers — the colourful city of Urumqi, Asia's largest wind power station at Dabancheng, the snow-capped Bogda Peak, the enchanting natural scenery of Tianchi Lake, the dream-like Sayram Lake and the Kunes Grassland, birthplace of the 'heavenly horses'.


賽里木湖 Sayram Lake
伊犁林则徐纪念馆
伊寧 Yining
那拉提 Narat
果子溝 Fruit Gully
喀納斯自然保護區
Kanas
Nature Reserve
哈巴河
Habahe
布爾津 Burqin
吉木乃口岸
Jeminay
北屯
Beitu
吉木乃
Jeminay
塔城市
Tacheng
和布克賽爾
Hobksar
額敏
Emin
和什托洛蓋鎮
Hoxtolgay
裕民
Yumin
托里
Toli
準 噶
J U N G G A
克拉瑪依市
Karamay
博樂市
Bole
(Bortala)
阿拉山口岸
Atalaw
賽里木湖
Sayram Lake
烏蘇市
Usu
霍爾果斯口岸
Korgas
精河
Jinghe
奎屯市
Kuytun
瑪納斯
Marus
石河子市
Shihezi
昌吉市
Changji
霍城
Huocheng
伊寧
Yining
尼勒克
Nilka
伊寧市
Yining
City
烏魯木齊
Ürümqi
鞏乃斯草原
Künes
Grassland
新源
Xinyuan
天 山 山 脈
達坂城
Dabancheng
白楊溝風景區
Baiyanggou
Scenic Area
巴音布魯克
自然保護區
Bayanbulak
Swan Reserve
新 疆 維 吾 爾 自 治 區
和靜
Hejing
和碩
Hoxud
博斯騰
Bosten La
拜城
Baicheng
輪台
Luntai
庫爾勒市
Korla
新和
Xinhe
阿克蘇市
Aksu
←至喀什 to Kashi
塔 里 木 河
T a r i m R i v e r

Xinjiang

TOURIST MAP OF THE TIANSHAN MOUNTAINS AREA


紅山咀口岸
Hongshanzhui
阿勒泰市
Altay
富蘊
Fuyun
青河
Qinghe
塔克什肯口岸
Takshiken
盆 地
BASIN
天山天池 Tianchi Lake
達坂城 Dabancheng
老爺廟
Laoyemiao
阜康市
Fukang
吉木薩爾
Jimsar
奇台
Qitai
木壘
Mori
博格達峰
Bogda Peak
巴里坤
Barkol
伊吾
Yiwu
Tianshan Mountains
吐魯番市 Turpan
高昌古城
Ruins of Gaochang
鄯善
Shanshan
托克遜
Toksun
哈密市
Hami
XINJIANG UYGUR AUTONOMOUS REGION
至甘肅 to Gansu
至甘肅 to Gansu
甘肅
Gansu
新疆
Xinjiang
烏魯木齊 Urumqi
吐魯番 Turpan
樓蘭古城
Loulan Ancient City
◎ 省級行政中心 regional capital
◉ 地級市、自治州行政中心 prefectural city
● 縣、自治縣行政中心 county seat
○ 村鎮 town
▲ 對外開放山峰 peak open to foreigners
口岸 border port
■ 景點 scenic spot
國界 national border
省界 provincial border
河流 river
高速公路 highway
主要公路 main road
公路 road
天山行路線 travel route



The Search for Lost Mountaineers

BOGDA PEAK

Photos & article by Xie Guanghui

On July 17, 1999, three days after we started our search for the three lost Hong Kong mountaineers, we arrived at the base camp at 3,600 metres altitude on the southern side of the Bogda Peak. In the setting sun, our figures cast long shadows on the pebbles. The Kazak camel tenders dragged their pack camels up, pulling the reins, and finally had them all kneel down one after another, like a train pulling into a station. The mountaineers quickly unpacked their camping and mountaineering equipment. They suddenly brought vitality to the deserted valley as they tried to find some flat land to set up their colourful tents.

The sun was on the horizon. In the crimson glow the tall Bogda Peak no longer looked so dazzling. The snow-capped peak reflected on the lake of melted snow looked so gentle, so delicate, just like the tip of an ice-cream cone. It was so deadly quiet that the sound of camels chewing their cud could be heard. Suddenly the whistle of the pressure cooker pierced the tranquillity and the air was filled with the delicious aroma of mutton. Wang Yong, who arrived two days earlier, was busy serving the food. He frowned and counted heads as we lined up for our food. Zhao Ziyun and Wang Longwen were missing.

Zhao Ziyun, over 60, was an engineer at the Xinjiang Geological Prospecting Team before retirement. Not only familiar with the geography of Xinjiang but also an experienced outdoorsman, Zhao was invited as a consultant for the team. Wang Longwen, in his 30s, is a surgeon in the People's Hospital of the Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region. Outdoor adventures are his hobby and he came as the team's doctor.

The temperature dropped dramatically in the bitter cold wind, and though we all added extra clothing we were still cold. We worried because Zhao Ziyun and Wang Longwen had no thick clothes nor electric torches with them. A cold caught at this height might easily turn into emphysema, which could be life-threatening without urgent treatment. Yang Benhua, the team leader, asked the Kazak camel tender to look for them. He hung several gas lamps by the tents to make them visible far away as he prayed for no snow that night.

Our Worries Dispersed

When they had set out that morning, Wang Longwen saw some ancient cliff paintings, and he asked Zhao Ziyun to have a look. So they lagged behind the team. Later, a downpour drove them into a local Kazak family's tent where they were entertained with milk tea and lost track of the time. Luckily, Zhao was familiar with the area and found the way to the camp in the dark.

Zhao and Wang were warmly welcomed and Wang Yong lit the gas stove to heat up some food for them. They poured out the icy water out of their shoes and Wang tried to dry them by the fire. Zhao showed Wang a trick to dry the insides of the shoes. He threw a dozen walnut-sized pebbles into the stove. Soon after scooping the hot pebbles into the shoes with a ladle, he shook them like a

kitchen chef, as hissing steam and bad odours poured out.

The Search Started

The temperature dropped as the hard rain over the next few days brought the snowline lower. The sun started to shine on the fifth day. In the afternoon on July 24, under a clear sky with wispy clouds and distant mountains clearly visible, the search officially started. Wang Yong, Cai Xinhu and Aishan, a local Uygur, prepared their mountaineering gear and enough food for a week and started climbing. At 7 p.m. they arrived at the camp at 4,300 metres altitude.

The Bogda Peak, 5,445 metres above sea level, is just a "young brother" among Xinjiang's snow-capped mountains, but its complex terrain and unpredictable weather make it one of the most difficult mountains to climb. On June 9, 1981, it was conquered by a Japanese mountaineering team, but one of the team died after dropping down an ice crevice. Fifteen years later, his body was washed out from under the glaciers. In August 1998, eight members of the Xinjiang Mountaineering Association successfully reached the summit, the first record of such a feat made by Chinese. A few days later, three Hong Kong mountaineers, Chan King Chuen, Yeung Chi Ho and Lam Chi Wai, went missing at 5,080 metres on their way to the summit.

On July 25, under a red morning glow, the mountaineers set out, three silhouettes against a gorgeous blue sky. Wang Yong took the lead. He had been on the national mountaineering team in 1986 and won the national cliff-climbing championship. Cai Xinhu, who was one of the eight successful climbers the year before, acted as the guide. The large-framed Aishan brought up the rear.

Between 4,300 metres and 4,700 metres, they came to an ice cliff 200 metres wide which resembled a waterfall dropping from the summit. The mountaineers tied themselves onto a thick rope line. Like lizards, they climbed close against the cliff, inch by inch, using crampons and ice axes. Below them was a deep valley. This part of the climb demands experience and skill, caution and balance. It took them about five hours to pass the ice cliff.

The Illusions of Nature

At 3 p.m., they reached the height of 4,844 metres and dark clouds gathered overhead. Soon the visibility dropped to zero and they had to make camp. Wang Yong took off his boots and slipped into his sleeping bag, holding damp insoles and socks on his chest to dry them with his body heat. Though very uncomfortable it was the only way to dry them. A few years ago a mountaineering team tried to climb Peak K2 in Xinjiang. One of the team was so tired that he fell asleep, without removing his boots after arriving at the campsite. His feet were frozen to his boots and he had to be taken to the hospital to cut his boots open. Unfortunately it was too late to save his feet and the doctors had to amputate them.

On the morning of July 26, the clouds dispersed. After having biscuits and coffee

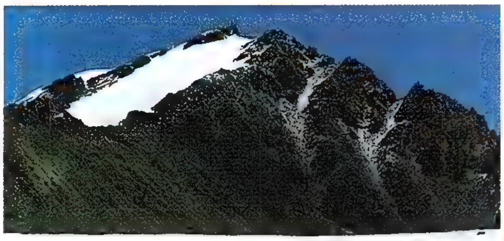
Previous page: The search team marching towards the Bogda Peak

1. **Crossing an icy river in the mountain**
2. **After three days, they reached the campsite at 3,600 metres.**
3. **Loading tents and other mountaineering equipment on to camels**
4. **Setting a bonfire to keep warm**
5. **Members of the mountaineering team having supper at the 3,600-metre-high campsite**

made with melted snow, they continued to climb. From 4,800 metres to 4,950 metres, the snow was over a metre deep. With their heavy gear on their backs, they moved forward with difficulty, step by step, amidst the soft snow blocks. It was hard work, making them thirsty and tired. Aishan was so tired that he put snow into his mouth rather than drinking bottled water. Wang Yong urged him to drink water but Aishan ignored him. The snow melted immediately in his mouth, cold but comfortable. Wang Yong warned him that he would regret it.

Exhausted after crossing a snowy slope, they came to a cliff of about 60 degrees. The rocks were covered with ice and ropes hung from the cliff, dangling like coloured ribbons. The ropes were left by previous mountaineering teams but they dared not use them and prepared their own. Cai Xinhu was tired and changed positions with Aishan. They tied themselves together with two ropes and started to climb. At 5,080 metres the snow ledge above hung over them like a mushroom.

The most difficult part was the protrusion and the mountaineers climbed almost facing the sky. They used ice axes to climb up, bending and panting, and soon became exhausted. At this point the snow-white summit of Bogda Peak seemed almost right in front of them. Cai Xinhu knew that it was only an illusion. Novices often get excited there and try to dash to the summit, but they soon learn that nature has tricked them. The year before Cai's team took eight hours to climb from 4,700 metres to 5,080 metres, and the same amount of time from there to the summit. Wang Yong wondered if the three Hong Kong mountaineers who started for the summit at 7 p.m. had succumbed to nature's illusion.



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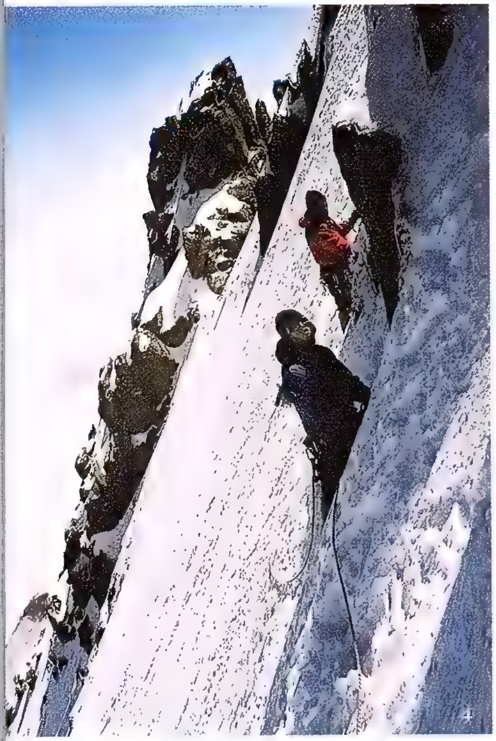
Bursting Chest and Jumping Heart

Since the Hong Kong mountaineers went missing at 5,080 metres, the team began to search further up after a short break. By 5 p.m. at 5,180 metres they were too tired to continue and made their camp for the night there. Wang Yong and Aishan ate, but Cai Xinhu, pale and nauseous, simply went to sleep.

The temperature dropped greatly and it snowed for six hours overnight. By 8 a.m. the sky had cleared, but the fog was still too thick to see very far. Three hours later, the fog dispersed and they hurriedly resumed searching towards the summit. Although the vertical distance was only 265 metres, it was very difficult to cover since the air was very thin. They had trouble catching their breath after moving only a few steps and felt that



their chests were bursting and their hearts jumping out. In the hip-deep snow, they were very weak.

Finally they reached the summit, a slanted, flat rock surface covered with a layer of ice and snow. They straightened up to view the vast white world underneath. The sunshine cast blue shadows on the snow, creating a wonderful picture. But they all had heavy hearts.

Wang Yong spoke to Yang Benhua on the walkie-talkie, telling him that they had found no trace of the mountaineers. Yang suggested they search downhill as clouds were moving in on the summit. Wang Yong took some photos and checked the time. They guessed it would take three hours to return to the campsite at 5,180 metres and set out on a zigzagging route.

At 7:30 p.m., as they reached the campsite, Wang Yong found a mountaineering lock in a rock crevice where the wind had blown away the snow. They started the digging there and at about one metre deep, they were surprised to discover the Hong Kong mountaineers' three bags containing a stove, some food, water bottles, a videocamera and Yeung Chi Ho's identity card. They felt that since this was the only suitable spot for a campsite, they might find other things if they kept on digging.

Despite Cai's dizziness, Aishan's exhaustion and Wang's fast-beating heart, they kept at it. By the time it was dark, they had dug a 20-square-metre pit, 1.5 metres deep. But they found nothing except a 30-metre-long rope.

On the morning of July 28, as the sun rose on the horizon, Wang Yong awakened bitterly cold and quivering. Outside the tent they pondered what would happen if someone slid down the slope by the campsite. So they filled a bag with ice and snow and released it from a steep slope; the bag disappeared in a few seconds, leaving but a trace. The three of them were dumbfounded.

There were two possibilities for the lost mountaineers: they fell over the cliff or were frozen to death. They concluded now that it was more likely the former, particularly since it was already 7 p.m. when they probably got to 5,080 metres and started to climb to the summit. Under other circumstances, they could have called for help through the walkie-talkie.

Lingering Fears

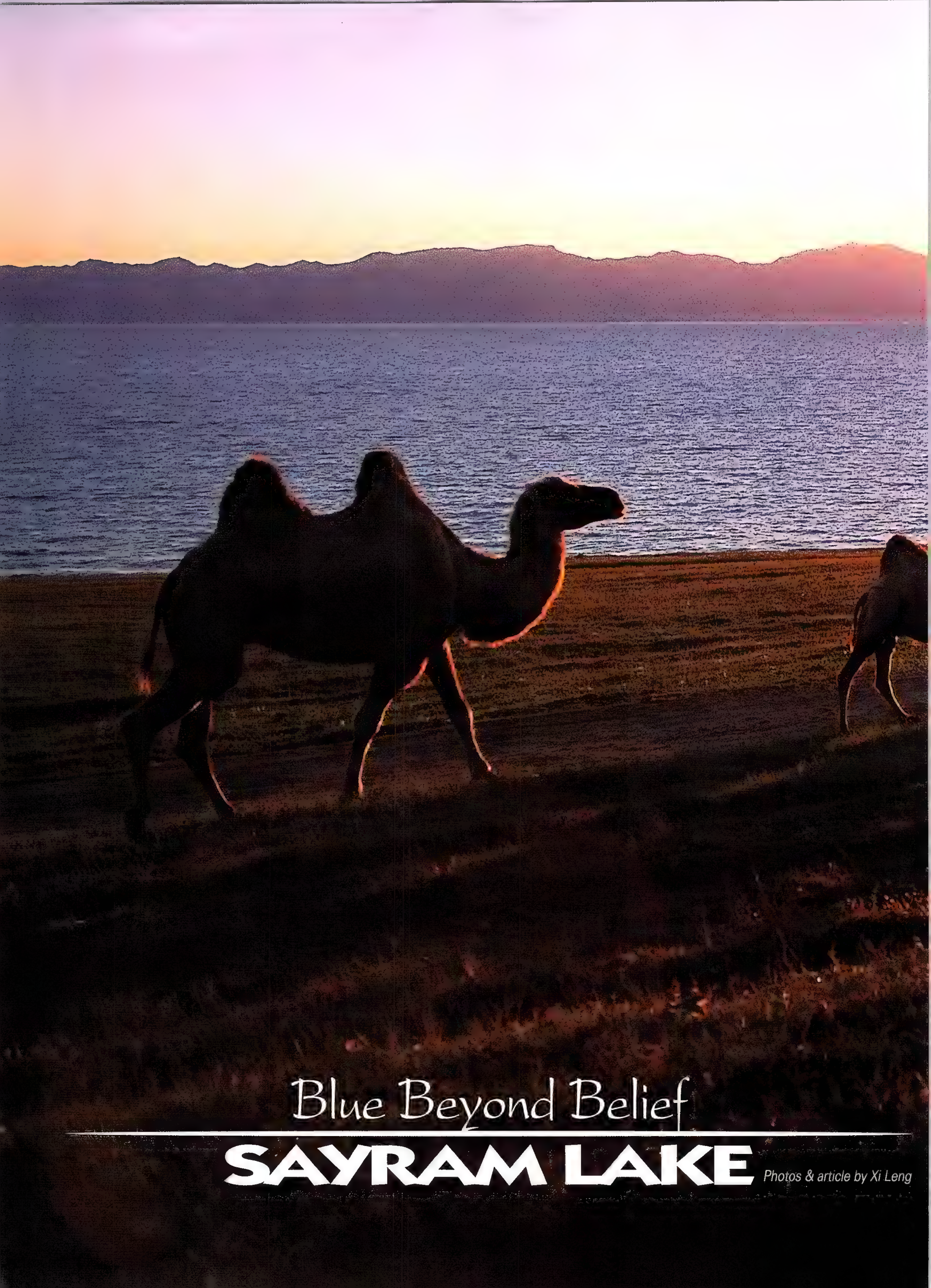
Each team member carried one of the lost mountaineers' bags. With heavier burdens, the downhill journey became more difficult and dangerous. Cai Xinhu, in particular, was very weak. While crossing the ice cliff, he was too weak to continue but dared not retreat to have a rest. He struck his axe into the ice and tied himself there with a rope dangling like a clock pendulum for a whole night.

Cai Xinhu returned to the base amid applause, but when people offered him congratulations, he was distressed and said, "I'll never do mountaineering again." Recalling his experience on the ice cliff, Cai still had a lingering fear.

On July 29, Mr. Ho Chi Ming, Chairman of the Hong Kong Ngok Fung Rock Climbing Society, accepted the belongings of the dead at the base camp and sent them back to their families in Hong Kong, who in turn sent letters of gratitude to the team who found them.

Translated by M. Q.

1. **The three mountaineers setting out from the campsite for the search (by Wang Yong)**
2. **At the high altitude, every step forward requires great effort. (by Wang Yong)**
3. **The slope at 5,080 looks like a snow-covered mushroom. (by Wang Yong)**
4. **Climbing a steep cliff like lizards (by Wang Yong)**
5. **At the top of the Bogda Peak at 5,445 metres above sea level (by Wang Yong)**

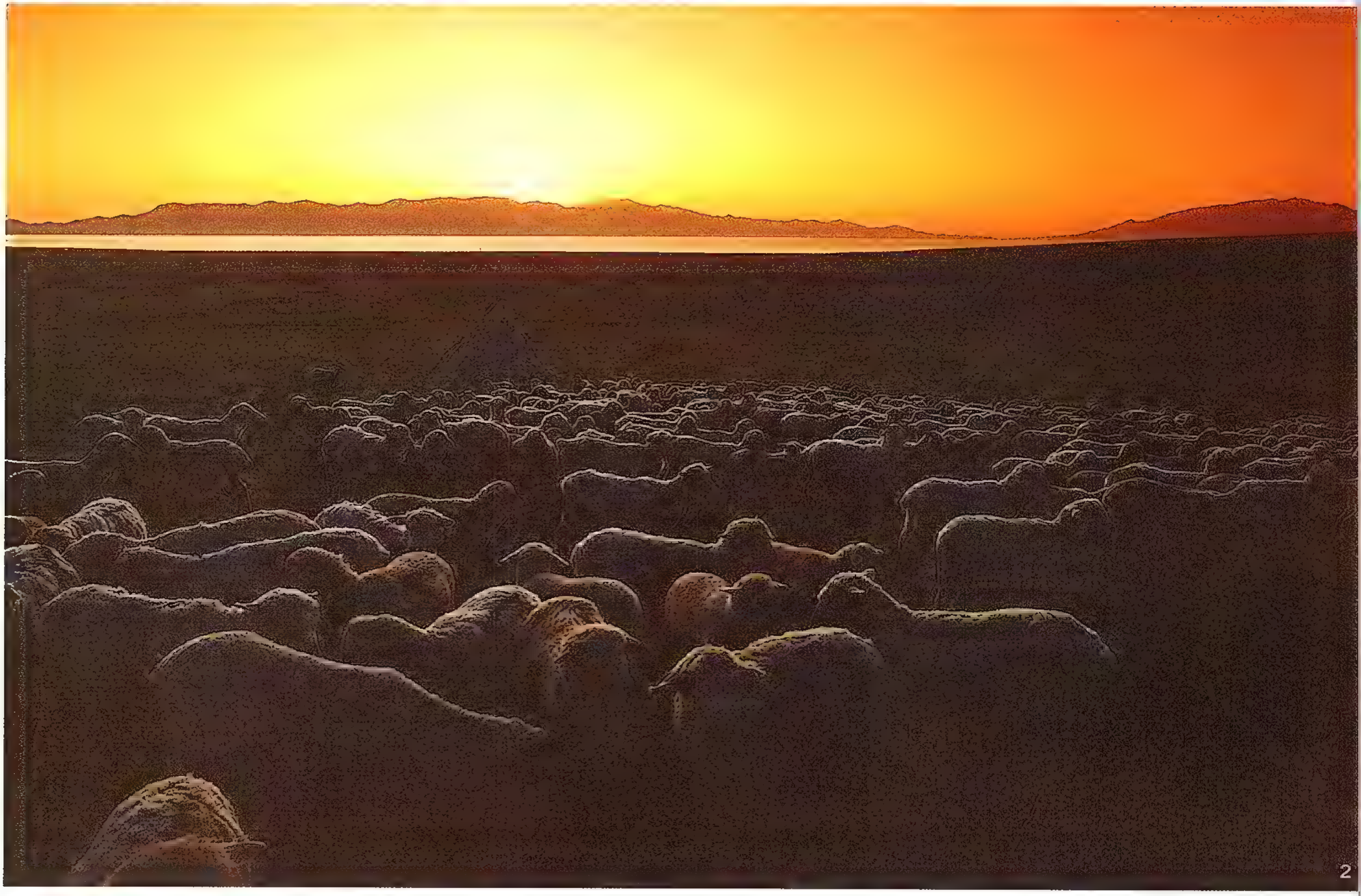


Blue Beyond Belief

SAYRAM LAKE

Photos & article by Xi Leng

1



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Under the cerulean sky, the wind-tossed mat of green grass extended over the gentle topography to reach the banks of the blue Sayram Lake. As it was mid-summer, a few white Mongolian yurts were scattered over this grassy area.

I walked towards the lake with Mr. Ma Tao, my driver, over the unctuous grassland. I could not take my eyes off the Sayram Lake, whose water was extraordinarily blue. I had seen many lakes, including the West Lake in Hangzhou, the Cuihu Lake in Kunming and recently, the Tianchi on the Bogda Peak, yet, never had I seen one as blue as this one. Mr. Ma said it is so blue because of its depth. The Sayram Lake is 2,073 metres above sea level and over 90 metres deep.

Situated on the northern Silk Road, it was the only pass through the Ili River Valley to connect Chang'an (now Xi'an) and Luoyang in the east with Persia and Rome in the west. Mr. Ma also told me that "sayram" is an ancient Turkish word meaning "blessing and safety". In ancient times, when Turkish people passed by, they would all turn to the lake and say, "Sayram!"

Saved by a Seven-Year-Old

Suddenly, two shepherd dogs ran straight towards us. Baring their sharp teeth, the dogs barked savagely as they circled around us, seemingly ready to attack. In fear, we prepared to defend ourselves. Mr. Ma's voice trembled as he said that a single dog was not likely to attack, but two dogs could be very dangerous. Panic-stricken, I glanced at the Mongolian yurt some distance away. Seeing our plight, a little boy quickly ran towards us and rapped the dogs and drove them away. Bater, the plump-faced boy who had saved us, was a lively seven-year-old. We quickly befriended him and his two dogs.

Bater's father, Aletanhan, wearing a dark-blue Mongolian robe, was on the top of the yurt to dismantle its felt cover. He rolled the pieces into small bundles and handed them down to his wife, Dayue. Without its cover, the top of the yurt resembled a huge wicker umbrella, or a huge bird cage. Then the wicker beams and folding timber walls were dismantled, and the yurt was completely gone. It was so quick, like a magic disappearing act.

Aletanhan greeted us and said it was a big pity that we had missed the Nadam Fair concluded yesterday. Though I thought that taking down the yurt meant they might be moving to another grazing pasture, Aletanhan said they would move later, in mid-September. Since the guests had left, there was simply no point in having an idle yurt stand there.

As we were chatting, white smoke floated up from a nearby yurt chimney. Suddenly, Dayue opened the felt door curtain and shouted, "Please come in for tea."

Strong Sheep for Good Income

In the middle of the yurt was a stove burning cow's dung, with a boiling kettle on top and a chimney above. Cupboards and suitcases stood along the felt-lined walls on both sides. Following the Mongolian tradition, we took off our shoes and sat cross-legged to the left of Aletanhan. Cooked mutton, butter, cheese and other dairy foods were placed on a low table, and hot milk tea was served. I had heard that since the herdspeople eat a lot of meat and dairy products, they must drink tea to help their digestion. I drank my tea hot, as should be done, and it was truly delicious.

Dayue said the tea was made of sheep's milk, though they drink mainly cow's milk. The sheep milking season starts in June, when the lambs have grown strong enough to eat some grass, and lasts just over a month.

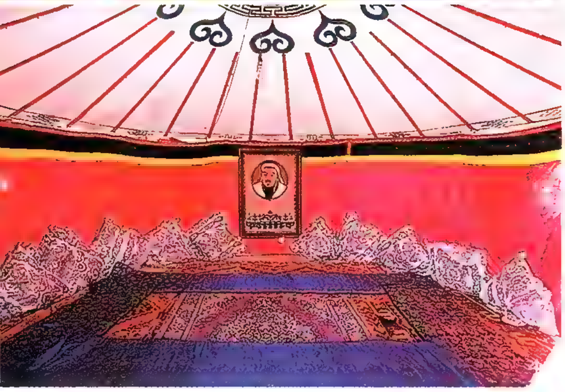
On the grassland, horses are the means of transport, while cows are raised mainly for their milk. It is the sheep that are the most important source of cash income for the herdspeople, and spring, the lambing season, is the most important time of year. With the birth of many healthy lambs, their flock will increase and they can buy things such as silver headgear for their children, a new yurt, a wind-powered electricity generator or a new jeep.

Aletanhan told me that basically all they do in the other three seasons is to make preparations for the spring. At the end of autumn, the herdsmen move breeding rams, which are raised separately, back into the herds to mate. The pregnant ewes are fed well with dried grass all winter to ensure stronger lambs. In early spring the ewes give

Previous page: Returning camels on the bank of the Sayram Lake at dusk

1. **Herdsmen move their herds to winter grazing land in October when winter starts in Sayram. (by Sun Jiabin)**
2. **Spring is the season that the numbers in the flock increase. (by Sun Jiabin)**
3. **The flowering grassland around the Sayram Lake in May (by Sun Jiabin)**

birth on the grassland. The male lambs are carried home in special felt bags while new-born females are left with the ewes. Sometimes the herdsmen have to help an ewe in a difficult labour by pulling out the lamb; they must then smear placental fluid on the lamb's mouths so that the ewe recognises her own lamb. Some ewes ignore their new-born lambs and even kick them away. In this case the women have to smear the ewe's own milk on the lamb's head and tail and force the ewe to lick the lamb until she acknowledges it as her own.



Strength and Lasso Skills

Cutting the mane of horses is a job for the women folks. Yet, to cut the mane, the horses must first be caught, which presents a good opportunity for the men to show their strength and skills.

"Men always like to deal with those untamed wicked studs," Aletanhan excitedly told me. "Only then can you see the best riders, the best lassoing skills and the most exciting fights between men and animals." After the horse is lassoed, the man must pull back with great force. If this is not done, the galloping stud may pull the man off his horse or escape with the lasso. The herdsman who stands at the back of the lassoing group must be very skilful because it will be his turn only after the others fail. If he fails to catch the stud, many lassos will be lost, and so will his reputation. A bold and highly skilled herdsman can often lasso and pull down a strong stud in the blink of the eye.

Nevertheless, to the Mongolians, boldness is only a small part of a man's character. Aletanhan explained that for a man on the grassland, bravery alone is not enough. He must have the ability to recognise the animals, primarily the horses. A good herdsman can immediately identify a lost horse, despite changes in colour and size over several years.

Lean Horses Win Races

The most exciting event for the Mongolians on the grassland is the annual Nadam Fair held in July. "Nadam" is a Mongolian word meaning merriment. During the fair, there are horse races, competitions of wrestling, archery, and chess, as well as performances of singing and dancing.

Some changes were introduced to the Nadam Fair this year. For instance, the fair's sponsors had solicited money through business advertisements and each competitor paid a 20-yuan application fee. This made the whole fair a more vivid and dramatic occasion. The winners' awards in all events were increased. The first prize in the horse competition, for example, was a jeep. Two types of horse races are held — galloping and cantering. Galloping horses are tested for speed, while cantering horses are tested for stamina and form.

Aletanhan took great care in raising his horse for the race this year. One month prior to the event, he picked a black horse out from the herd. The horse was kept separately in a special stall during the day and allowed to graze freely with the herd at night. In the daytime, the horse was given only clear well water, but nothing to eat.

In training that started at dusk, the horse was made to run 20-30 kilometres each time, finishing around midnight. Aletanhan believes that ability is not enough to win a race; a horse also needs a good lean figure and strong stamina.

In fact, Aletanhan lost the race though he did not mention it himself. Later, Bater told us quietly that many guests had visited their family the day before the race. They put up a yurt for them and, in entertaining them that night, his father had drunk a lot. It seems that friendship on the grassland is more important than a race.

We left at dusk, just as the sunlight gave way to the golden evening glow. The camels, horses, cows and sheep were coming back from grazing in the vast grassland, much like swimming fish, while the sun's rays put a dazzling golden hue on the Sayram Lake. ⊂

Translated by Li Zhenguo

1. After the Nadam Fair, the yurts for guests are dismantled.
2. A beautiful Mongolian yurt disappears in a few minutes, leaving only the frames and posts.
3. Building a yurt for guests from afar
4. A portrait of Genghis Khan is hung on the wall of a Mongolian family's yurt.
5. Sayram Lake in spring (by Sun Jiabin)

6

A Stunning Grassland
KÜNES

Photos & article by Ge Ling

One summer day, after crossing the dry, desolate and boundless Gobi Desert under the bright noon-day sun, our bus entered the valley in Künes (Xinyuan). In the subdued light we opened our squinting eyes to see villages hidden behind trees and the swift Künes River. The air became fresher and the pastureland scenery grew wider. Mountains rolled endlessly away on both sides. Thin grasses covered the mountains like soft green carpets. On the mountains, forests of tall dragon spruces grew here and there while white clouds floated above. On the grassland by the highway, small blue flowers bloomed and boxes of beehives were lined up by the beekeepers' yurts.

Xinjiang's Most Beautiful Grassland

We stopped in front of a yurt. A man in his 30s, wearing protective netting over his head, carefully removed squares of honeycombs from the beehives and inserted them into a machine, ignoring the buzzing bees around him. The centrifugal force of the creaking machine forced the honey out of the honeycombs and shortly, pale yellow, sticky and transparent honey flowed into an iron pail. His wife came out of the yurt with a child in her arm, carrying a white plastic pail. The woman was more willing to talk than the

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man, though he seemed to be good-natured. From their accent, we guessed they were from Jinhua of Zhejiang Province in East China. When asked why they had travelled all the way here, the answer was: "Künes is the most beautiful grassland in Xinjiang." The woman explained that in the southeast, there are few varieties of plants that have a long flowering period, such as rape which blossoms for 20 days around the Qingming Festival. Moreover, the bee, a very sensitive insect, doesn't like flowers polluted by pesticide and smoke. This valley in the Tianshan Mountains, free of pollution, has plenty of rain, an undulating terrain and grasslands for all seasons. Many kinds of wild fruits and flowers grow in the mountains.

Some brave visitors attempted to have a closer look at the beehives, but the bees swarmed around them. Scared, the visitors tried to wave them away, which annoyed the bees. When the visitors fled in all directions, the couple chuckled, saying that was the wrong thing to do. Bees are naturally vigilant of anyone getting near their hives, so it is best to stand still.

"The wild flowers of the Tianshan Mountains make our honey very nutritious. Why don't you buy some?" The woman beekeeper told us her full pail of honey was a "Chinese-foreign joint-venture" product. Since flowering medicinal herbs, such as root of hairy asiabell and fritillary bulb, flourish here, this honey could help alleviate bronchitis. Italian Black Bees, which fly longer distances and collect 30 percent more honey than other bees, had been introduced here — which explains why she referred to her honey as a "joint-venture" product.

Rafting on a Grassland River

Soon after we arrived at the reception centre of Narat Grassland in Xinyuan County, we went rafting in high spirits. The water level of the Künes River was high, probably due to recent rains. When everyone had his or her orange life jacket on, the young Kazak boatman released the stern rope and punted the raft away from the shore. We moved quickly into the centre of the river and bobbed with the waves. Judging by the size of the waves, the river did not seem very deep. When we were floating with the waves, we saw birch trees retreat fast,

1. **The herdsmen raise cows for their own milk supply.**
2. **Two herdsmen returning home, with baby lambs in their embraces**
3. **On the grassland along the highway, beekeepers set their honeycombs.**
4. **In June, the Künes Grassland is covered by flowers of various colours.**
5. **Tianshan Poppy dominates the grassland in May. (by Sun Jiabin)**

indicating that the current was very rapid. Cheerful laughter gave way to panicky glances as the boatman frowned and sweated in his desperate effort to keep the raft on course. Despite his comforting words, we realised the situation was going beyond his control.

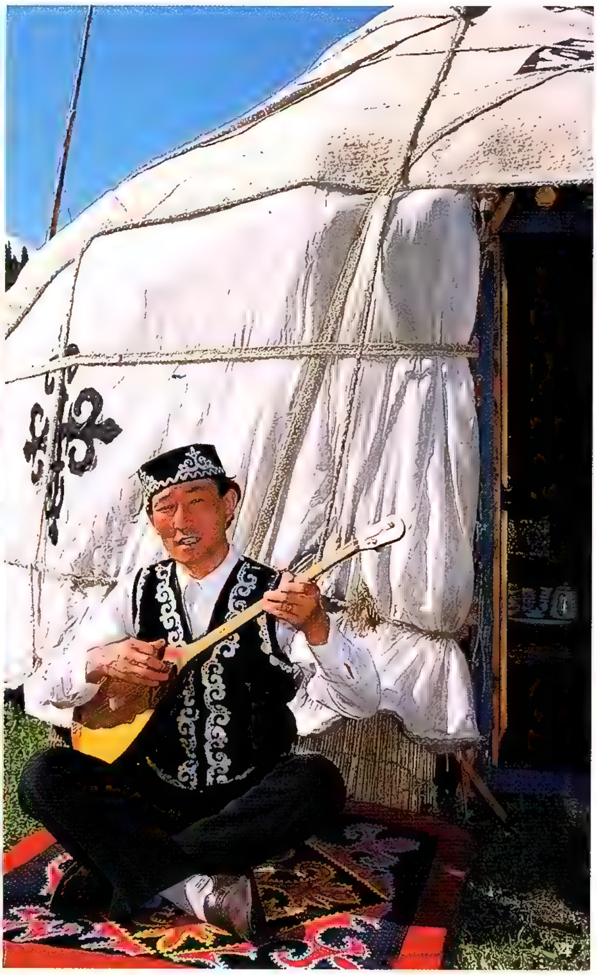
We could not get close to the bank at all and swiftly drifted past the debarkation point. The boatman tried to throw the anchor rope to the riverbank, but failed. Seeing the situation was serious, some people on the bank put on life jackets and ran along the river. One young Kazak plunged into the water at a point ahead of the raft, but the rolling waves hit him and carried him several metres downstream. More people ran after the boat and another Kazak youth risked his life jumping into the water in front of the raft. Grasping the tree roots, he stood firmly against the swift current. First he rescued the choking youth and then grabbed our raft's rope to bring us safely back to the shore. Relief was evident on everyone's faces.

Later, in the glow of the sunset, amidst the crackling sounds and sparks of a bonfire, the tourists and the local Kazaks formed a circle, singing and dancing. We met the two young men who saved the raft. When asked if they were good swimmers, one of them shyly said, "We Kazaks are an ethnic group on horse back, so most of us cannot swim." They explained that when they noticed we were in danger at that time, they forgot about the fact that they could not swim. Their simple words moved us greatly, yet to them it was just a normal thing to do.

The Summer Pasture of Narat

The Narat Grassland, the largest valley grassland in Xinjiang, is actually on the mountain slopes. In Mongolian, Narat means sunny. As our tour bus climbed along a winding mountain road to the Narat summer pasture, the morning sun shone on the Narat

1. **Folk Kazak performances given on the grassland**
2. **Rafting is a new tourist program on the grassland.**
3. **Singing and dancing around a bonfire**
4. **Dongbula, made of birch or pine wood, is a unique Kazak music instrument.**
5. **Scenery of the Künes Grassland (by Sun Jiabin)**



River, which looked like a silver ribbon threading through undulating hills. The flourishing thin grass covered the hill slopes in varying shades of green.

The slope was dotted with goats, oxen and horses. A stream flowed down from the snowy mountain top; on its banks, Kazak yurts stood here and there like mushrooms. It was a very quiet and peaceful place. A tall, strong Kazak herdsman riding a big horse and herding a flock of sheep, passed in front of us. The clacking of the horse's hooves echoed in the air. Our guide told us that this pastureland is the home of Xinjiang fine-wool sheep and also the home of the Tianma (Heavenly) horse of the Han Dynasty — the Ili horse.

In the Western Han Dynasty (206 B.C.-A.D.24), after enduring great hardships, Zhang Qian, an imperial envoy to the Western Region, reported to Emperor Wudi after his mission, that there was a large Hanxue horse in Dawan of Central Asia. The emperor was delighted to hear this because his troops, like the Huns, were riding the small Mongolian horse; he thought that by replacing them with Hanxue horses, his

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cavalry could become more powerful and easily defeat the Huns.

Emperor Wudi sent an envoy group to deliver 1,000 taels of gold and a gold horse, but the Dawan king killed all the envoys. Furious, Emperor Wudi sent a 6,000-strong cavalry unit to conquer Dawan, but they suffered heavy casualties while crossing the desert and were defeated. The emperor then sent a 60,000-strong regiment, of which half reached and encircled Dawan's capital. The king was forced to hand over 30 Hanxue horses.

The existence of Dawan is recorded in the *Volume of the Western Region, History of the Han Dynasty*, but its location is in the present-day Kirghizstan which is actually far from Narat.

Guests of a Kazak Farmer

We were warmly received at the yurt of our host, a Kazak farmer called Sailik. He stirred the contents of an ox-hide barrel with a wooden ladle and soon the room was filled with the sweet aroma of wine. He handed everyone a cup of horse-milk wine and stared at us until we all drank it in one mouthful. He then gave us a big smile. This wine is only available in summer, when the mares give birth. Old wine yeast is added to the horse milk to let it ferment. The wine tastes good, a little like fermented rice, but is somewhat sour.

Kazaks are born singers and dancers. After the wine Sailik became excited and crimson-faced. From the wall, he took his dongbula fiddle, a unique Kazak musical instrument with two strings and a dozen frets, and began to play and sing his song:

The various auspicious birds flying in the sky,
Each one has its own home.
Distinguished guests, you have been travelling hard,
Please tell us how you found our grassland.

Sailik plucked his fiddle and sang heartily, the beautiful music and sentimental song resounding in the air. When we parted, Sailik played again and sang us a farewell song:

I'm not sad about today's parting,
Without parting, there will be no reuniting.
Please send me the photos you have taken,
My gift for you is my singing.

As the evening glow vanished and darkness blurred the scenery, we left the grassland. But its unique customs remained alive in our minds and the song lingered in our ears.

Translated by M.Q.

1. **Felt is an important part of a yurt. (by Wang Miao)**
2. **When the hostess serves horse-milk wine, the yurt is filled with the fresh aroma.**
3. **A Kazak yurt on the Künes Grassland**
4. **Wool is the main source of the herdsmen's income. (by Wang Miao)**

From a Pasture to a Beautiful City

URÜMQI

Photos & article by Ling Yin

The plane tilted and glided gently down through the clear, azure sky. Through the window, I could see the city of Urümqi with Mount Bogda glistening like a silvery pagoda to its east, the imposing Tianshan Mountains rolling like a thousand galloping horses in the south and the yellow sand dunes of the Junggar Basin undulating like waves far into the northwest horizon. Urümqi, my destination, resembled a piece of green jade inlaid on the northern side of the Tianshan Mountains.

Camel Bells on the Silk Road

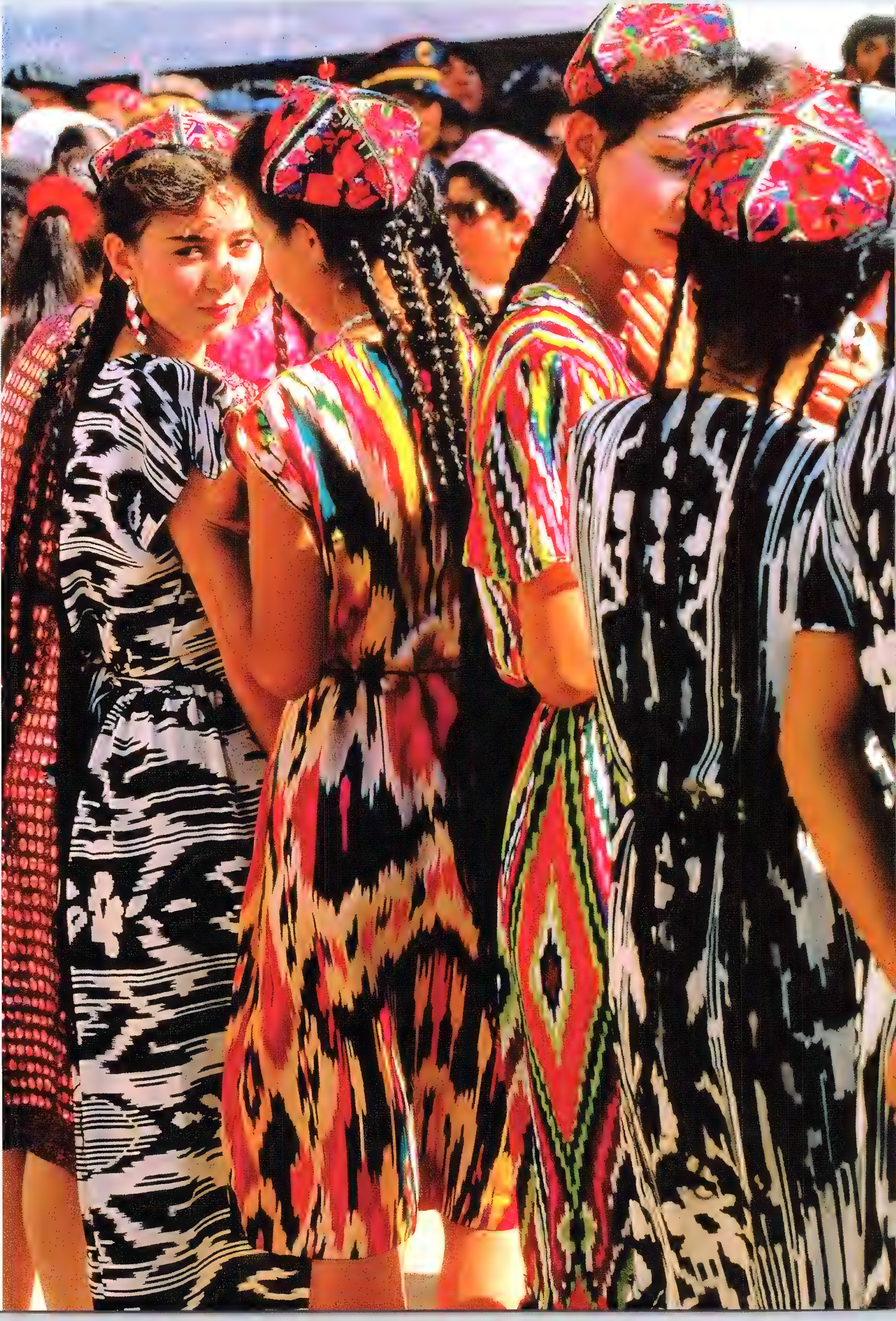
In 138, when the Han-dynasty territories were continually encroached upon by the Huns, Emperor Wudi sent Zhang Qian to the Western Region to form an alliance with Dayuezhi to fight the Huns. Zhang Qian was captured and held for 10 years by the Huns, but the report he wrote on his return greatly aroused the interest of Emperor Wudi. He wrote not only about the oases in today's Xinjiang and the peoples there, but also about the routes leading to the various states in the Western Region and to India, Persia and the Caspian Sea. His report eventually defined the Silk Road through the Western Region, along which camel bells rang for centuries.

In those days, merchants loaded bundles of raw silk and bolts of woven silks and satins on camel caravans and travelled from Xi'an and Luoyang over the Shaanxi-Gansu Plateau and the Hexi Corridor to Dunhuang and farther westward through the Taklimakan Desert. But these travel-weary merchants did not know nor care about their goods' destination. All they wanted was to exchange their luxury goods for money. The goods were then shipped to more distant places by Persian and Syrian merchants. Only seamen at the Mediterranean ports knew that Rome was the final destination and main market.

In fact, the Silk Road was more than one route. The route through the oases irrigated by melted snow along the northern foot of the Kunlun Mountains to Persia and the Indian Ocean was known as the southern route. The northern route ran along the edge of the desert on the southern side of the Tianshan Mountains and climbed over the Pamirs to reach Central Asia and the Persian Gulf. After the Eastern Han Dynasty (25-220), a new northern route was established to reach the Mediterranean and the original northern one became the central route.

During the Tang Dynasty (618-907), when the Kumu River in the lower reaches of the Tarim River changed course, Lop Nur was eventually depleted of water. Loulan, an oasis city and a pivot, together with the southern route, declined. Trading activities

1. **A man reading the Uygur edition of *Xinjiang Daily* published in Urümqi, capital of the Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region**
2. **Folk performances are given in many hotels' restaurants.**
3. **Young ladies of Uygur ethnic group (by Chan Yat Nin)**



along the central route was, at this time, also interrupted by incessant wars that broke out after the Western Region was united by the Tang Dynasty. As a result, the northern route became the main route and Ura Nur on the southern outskirts of Urümqi, 17 kilometres from the city centre, became a key junction on this route. As the Tang government had built a town there to collect tax, the Urümqi area gradually became a communications centre for economic and cultural exchanges between the East and West along the Silk Road.

By the Song Dynasty (960-1279), when the Silk Road on the Sea came into existence, the cities, towns and postal stations along the overland Silk Road gradually sank into oblivion.

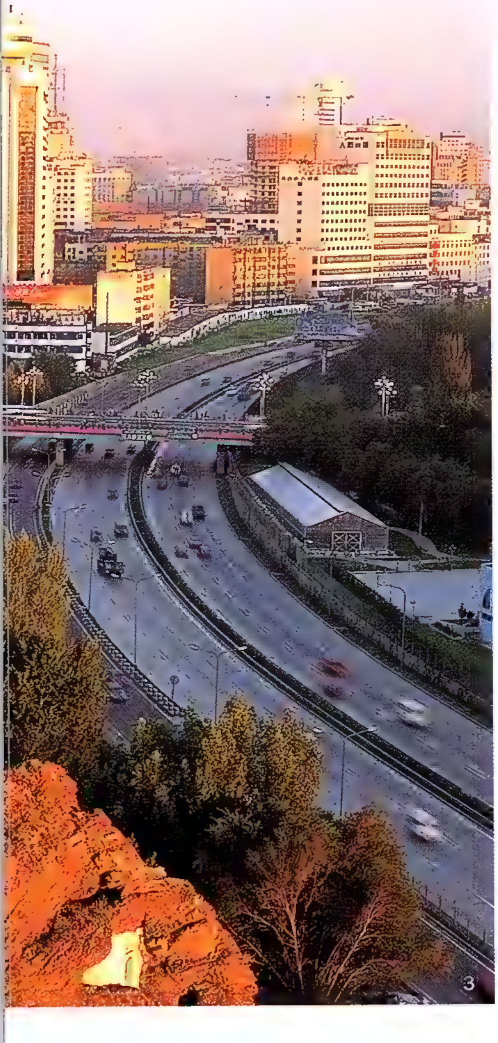
A Different World

Urümqi, the capital city of the Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region where I had just landed in the early morning, is populated by the Han and Uygur peoples and 13 other ethnic minorities, including Kazak, Hui and Mongolian.

Everything here was new to me. The airport's background music was *In a Distant Place*, a Xinjiang folk song with a heart-

stirring tune and lyrics composed by Wang Luobin. On the bus into the city district, I saw advertisements, shops and Muslim restaurants flitting by on both sides of the road. All the street signs were in both the Han and Uygur languages. Among the pedestrians walking across the zebra crosswalk were men wearing gowns reaching the knees and small embroidered caps and women with many braids and colourful dresses. The minarets of the mosques rose above poplar trees in the distance. I felt like I was in a foreign land.

The busiest place in the city in the early morning is the slaughterhouse. Under the dim street lights, several dozen men came one after another to a wall with a carpet in front. They removed their shoes, kneeled down, bowed and chanted prayers before they went in to start work. The slaughterhouse handles over 4,000 sheep every day, which is about two-thirds of the total supply on the Urümqi market. Muslims do not consume the flesh of pigs, donkeys, carnivores, and birds and animals of prey, nor their blood.



Urümqi — a Beautiful Pasture

The name of the city means "a beautiful pasture" in Mongolian. Today, the top of the perpendicular Hongshan (Red Hill) Cliff offers a grand view of the People's Park shaded by green trees below and a clear lake surrounded by tall buildings, such as the Xinjiang People's Hall, Science and Technology Museum, Electricity Mansion, Grain Trading Centre, Holiday Inn and International Hotel. The architectural style of these modern buildings combine harmoniously with traditional ethnic art and a rich Islamic atmosphere. In the background are the chain of snow-capped peaks of the Tianshan Mountains which glitter in the sunlight. The beautiful old pasture has been transformed into a beautiful city.

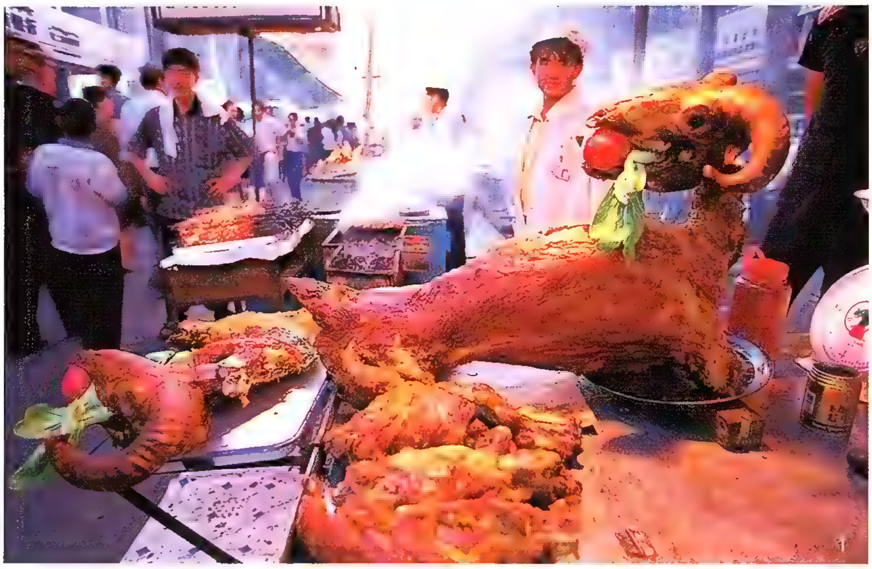
The best way to take a closer look at Urümqi is to stroll around in the streets. Near the Southern Great Mosque I followed a foreign backpacker who was warmly pointed on her way to Erdaoqiao market by a Uygur woman. In this market for ethnic goods you can buy Uygur skull caps, Aidili silk, small Yengisar knives, Hotan rugs, and just about anything that is typical of Xinjiang. The gems, jewellery, clothes, shoes, and ordinary items also bear ethnic characteristics.

Because of its dry climate, the relics of Xinjiang's long history and cultural traditions have been well preserved. On display in the Xinjiang Museum is a 3,000-year-old "sleeping beauty", which is so far the oldest preserved corpse found in China — over 900 years older than the female corpse previously found at Mawangdui in Hunan Province. There are also many unearthed pottery vessels, inscribed bamboo strips, silks and satins of the Han and Tang dynasties.

Xinjiang is home to a large number of world champions in sports. Among them are Wang Tao, a top table-tennis player; Han Xinping, who won three successive championship titles in the World Model Aeroplane Championships; and Li Wenjie, a world target shooting champion. There are also first-class sportsmen in horsemanship, archery and motorcycle racing. With a guide, you can visit and see sports demonstrations at Xinjiang's Second Sports Training Team at Urümqi's South Gate.

Contact: Mr. Su Zhikun, general manager of the International Hotel. Telephone: (991) 383 6400.

1. **The slaughterhouse starts work early in the morning.**
2. **Visiting the exhibition room of the Xinjiang Archaeology Institution**
3. **Hongshan (Red Hill) is a landmark of Urümqi.**
4. **Shooting is a strong sports event of Xinjiang, from where a world champion has emerged.**
5. **Han Xinping, the man who won three continuous world championships of model plane competitions.**
6. **Xinjiang has the best archers.**



Local Xinjiang Flavours

At dusk, various aromas emerged from snack stalls that magically sprang up under bright lights on the May 1st Street. As I strolled along, I saw shish kebab, baked dumplings, pulao, noodles, rice-filled intestines and roast chickens. Most attractive was the roast whole lamb.

Roast whole lamb, the most characteristic food of Xinjiang, is somewhat similar to Beijing's roast duck and Guangzhou's roast suckling pig, but much more sumptuous. A two-year-old Altay castrated ram is the best choice. After the ram is dressed, it is pierced from head to tail with a wooden stick with iron nails, and then coated with a mixture of egg yolk, salt water, ginger, *ziran* powder (a special Xinjiang condiment), pepper and flour. The ram is then placed head down into a pit-like stove, which the local people also use to bake their nang. The opening of the stove is covered and sealed with a wet cloth. Roasting takes about an hour and it is ready when the meat near the stick turns white and the whole ram becomes golden brown. I was staring at the roast lamb with a piece of red silk tied on its head and parsley in its mouth, when the white-capped, young Uygur stall-keeper leaned forward, handed me a morsel and said enthusiastically, "Try it. It's free." Unable to resist, I tried a few mouthfuls and found it was crispy, tender and very delicious.

Xinjiang's shish kebab is also known far and wide. At one stall, I saw a dense row of skewered mutton broiling and sizzling over a tray of red hot charcoal. Those who preferred it hot added chilli and pepper powder. The customers sat in a semi-circle around the fire, so that they could also watch the skilful young Uygur chef work. He said the best shish kebab is made of mutton with both fat and lean meat.

Pulao, or "finger rice" to the Han people, is another favourite food of the Uygur, Kazak and other ethnic peoples in Xinjiang. Pulao usually consists of rice mixed with mutton, carrots, raisins, onions and vegetable oil. Chicken, duck, goose or beef can be used to replace mutton. The vegetarian Pulao, or sweet Pulao, adds walnuts and dried apricots.

As I rose to go after only a few mouthfuls, the proprietor looked puzzled. I pointed at the other food stalls, touched my stomach and said, "I want to try more," which made him laugh and say, "Yakexi (very good)!"

1. Roasted whole lamb is the most characteristic dish of Xinjiang.
2. Many food stalls open at night on the Beijing Road, serving all kinds of snacks.
3. Mianfeizi, a Xinjiang speciality
4. A dessert made of raisins, dried apricots and nuts
5. Nang, the staple food of the Xinjiang people

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Largest of Its Kind in Asia

DABANCHENG WIND POWER STATION

Photos & article by Wu Shan

In the central control room Zhang Hua sat down on a chair beside a computer table before he spoke, "Wang Luobin's song *Girls of Dabancheng* has made Dabancheng known far and wide though it is a small place in Xinjiang. But what has impressed people most, I think, is our over 100 anemo-electric (wind-power) generators." Zhang Hua is a refined, bespectacled young man who graduated from the Urümqi Hydro-Electric Engineering School in 1994, and is now the manager of the Dabancheng Wind Power Station. He talked about the station's 13 grey single generators, each with a capacity of 150 kilowatts, which were the first batch of wind power generators imported from Denmark. Of the eight white ones imported from Germany in 1995 behind those, three are 450-kilowatt, three are 500-kilowatt, and two are 600-kilowatt. The ones farthest away are the 600-kilowatt generators built in China in 1997 with imported German technology. "We still rely on overseas producers for generator's impellers, so now the Chinese experts are working hard on the problems in production."

Natural Mountain Power

The central control room of the Dabancheng Wind Power Station is something like the bridge of a ship. Over a long row of computers you can see numerous wind-driven generators standing like masts in the sea of the vast gobi desert. As the huge impellers turn, each generator's rotation speed, output power and other data are shown on the computer screens.

I wondered where the natural wind power comes from, and Zhang explained that the Tianshan Mountains stand in central Xinjiang like a screen dividing the area in two, with the Tarim Basin in the south and the Junggar Basin in the north. The two different climates produce convective air currents,

which gain force at Dabancheng, a gap in this protective screen.

Though the generators' impellers seemed to be not rotating fast to me, Zhang's computers showed that the rotation speed was 202.5 kilometres per hour. He also stated that though the total generating capacity is only 57,500 kilowatts now, Dabancheng is already the largest wind power station in Asia. Surveys indicate that the wind power here is strong enough for 2,500,000 kilowatts — a brilliant prospect for further development.

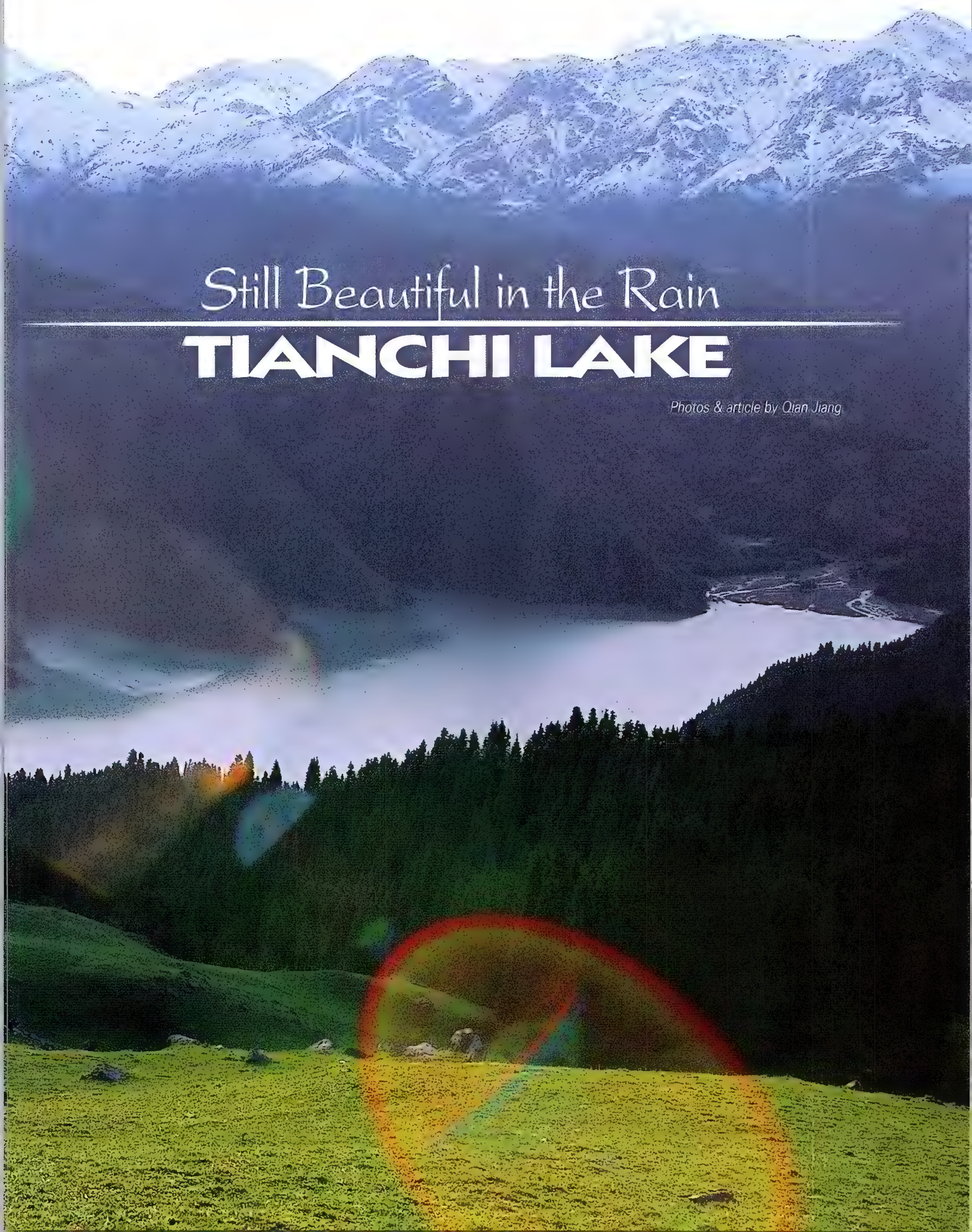
The New Century's Energy Source

With the wind as a natural resource, these generators produce low-cost power. As long as they keep rotating, the money keeps flowing in. To guarantee these machines run properly, technicians routinely do overhauls. I followed two young technicians to a chimney-like, 50-metre high generator tower and climbed up inside. The wind was howling outside and the entire tower shook violently to and fro, like trees swaying in a windstorm. As the technicians took out tools, another youth came up.

Even though it was his rest day, he was interested in having a look at this German generator, which he had never seen before. A recent graduate from the Space Science Department of the Northwestern Industry University, he had come to work here on his own initiative. The wind power technology here is the most advanced in the country, and behind only Denmark, Germany and Sweden in the world. He believes that wind power is an important energy resource for development in the new century, because it is environmentally friendly and costs less than thermal power. Besides, it is an ideal means of power generation in remote, sparsely populated regions like grasslands, deserts and islands.

Translated by Xiong Zhenru

1. **Within the control room of the Dabancheng Wind Power Station**
2. **The workers are checking generators imported from Germany.**
3. **With over 100 generators, Dabancheng is so far the largest wind power station in Asia.**



Still Beautiful in the Rain

TIANCHI LAKE

Photos & article by Qian Jiang

The gloomy weather finally turned into rain. The bus driver explained that whenever it rains in Urümqi, it is bound to snow in the Tianshan Mountains. He advised me to go to the Tianchi Lake when the weather turned fine. I replied that I loved to see the mist arise from the valleys after the rain and that besides, on rainy days fewer people would be there.

The driver looked sceptical as the bus sped along the expressway in torrential rain. In the distance, the Tianshan Mountains were dim silhouettes. We pulled in at the Fukang Long-distance Bus Station at the foot of the mountains and the driver refused to go any further, saying that only an idiot would go to the Tianchi Lake in such weather.

It was cold and gloomy in the waiting room. Everyone I encountered said there was no other bus going to Tianchi. At the end of my tether I met a middle-aged Kazak, who introduced himself as Saterhan, an inn owner at Tianchi. Saterhan said confidently that he could help me, including a stay at his inexpensive inn and a saving on the admission ticket. In addition, he would also be my guide.

Entering Tianchi with a Kazak Cap

In no time, the two of us were hitchhiking in a truck towards the Tianchi Lake. Precipitous cliffs towered into the sky by the highway and gigantic trees, thin vines and grass grew in cliff crevices, appearing particularly verdant in the rain. Down below was a swift and clear river of cold mountain water. As the truck spiralled up, the temperature dropped. Shortly before we came to the Tianchi Scenic Area ticket office, Saterhan took out a four-ridged embroidered Kazak cap and put it on my head. I tried to adjust it a bit but he warned me that the ridge must be in line with the bridge of the nose. He said that if I wore it correctly people would assume I was a Kazak and I wouldn't have to pay the admission fee. It worked just as he had predicted.

By the time we reached Tianchi, it had turned into a windstorm. In distance, the Bogda (meaning "god" in Mongolian) Peak was enveloped in clouds. Over the dark grey surface of the lake, waves surged, sending up gusts of chilly air.

A New Life in Tourism

Many yurt hostels run by the Kazaks cover Tianchi's southern slopes. I followed Saterhan as barking dogs ran out. People who pulled open their curtain doors were astonished to see a tourist in this bad weather. Saterhan's yurt inn was on the upper end of the grassy southern slope because he was a late-comer in the business and the best places were already taken. He apologised for the long walk, saying that a higher position offered a better view of the lake.

Inside his yurt, Saterhan's wife Guli and their eight-year-old son Tuoken were sitting on the felt carpet watching TV. They immediately got up to tidy the room, fire up the stove and boil hot water. In a short while, they set out all sorts of Kazak pastries with interesting names, as well as steaming milk tea. Saterhan, beaming, sat cross-legged on the felt and drank a bowl of milk tea.

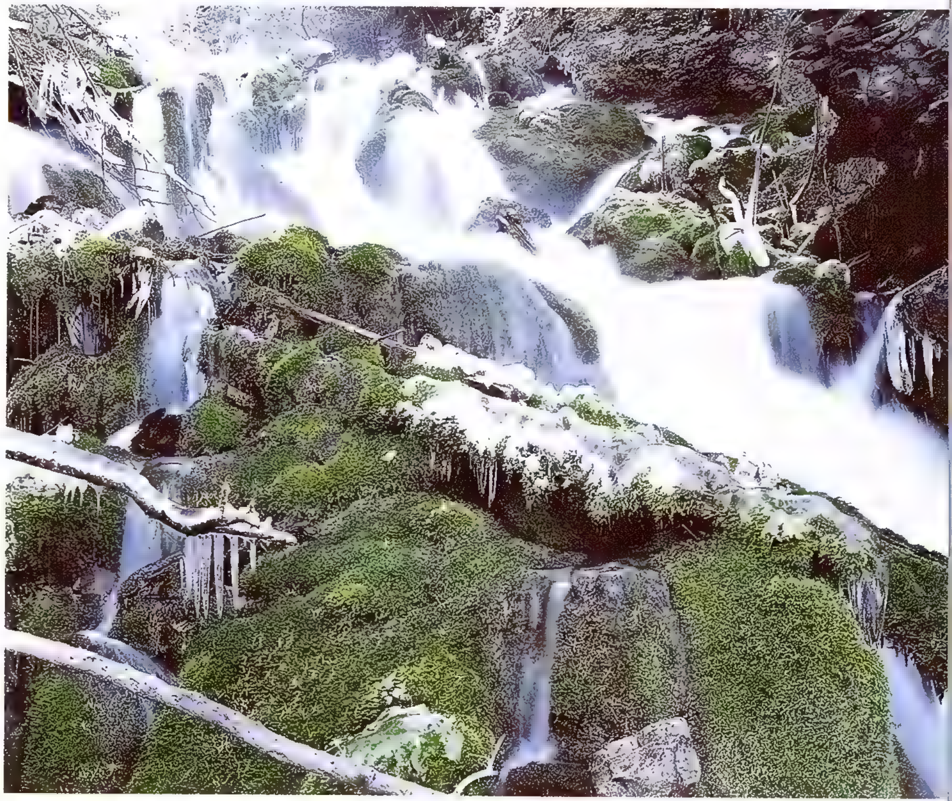
Saterhan had left the grassland at 18 to join the People's Liberation Army and served in Lanzhou. Demobilised at 25, he then worked in the Fukang Machine Factory, expecting to have a secure and comfortable life. Unfortunately, the factory's performance went from bad to worse and he was laid off the year before last. It was hard for him to accept such a thing. Eventually he set up this small inn, which also provides sightseeing on horseback around the lake, mutton feasts with horse-milk wine and Karaoke entertainment. Proudly, he said he earned over 30,000 yuan last year, much more than he ever made as a worker.

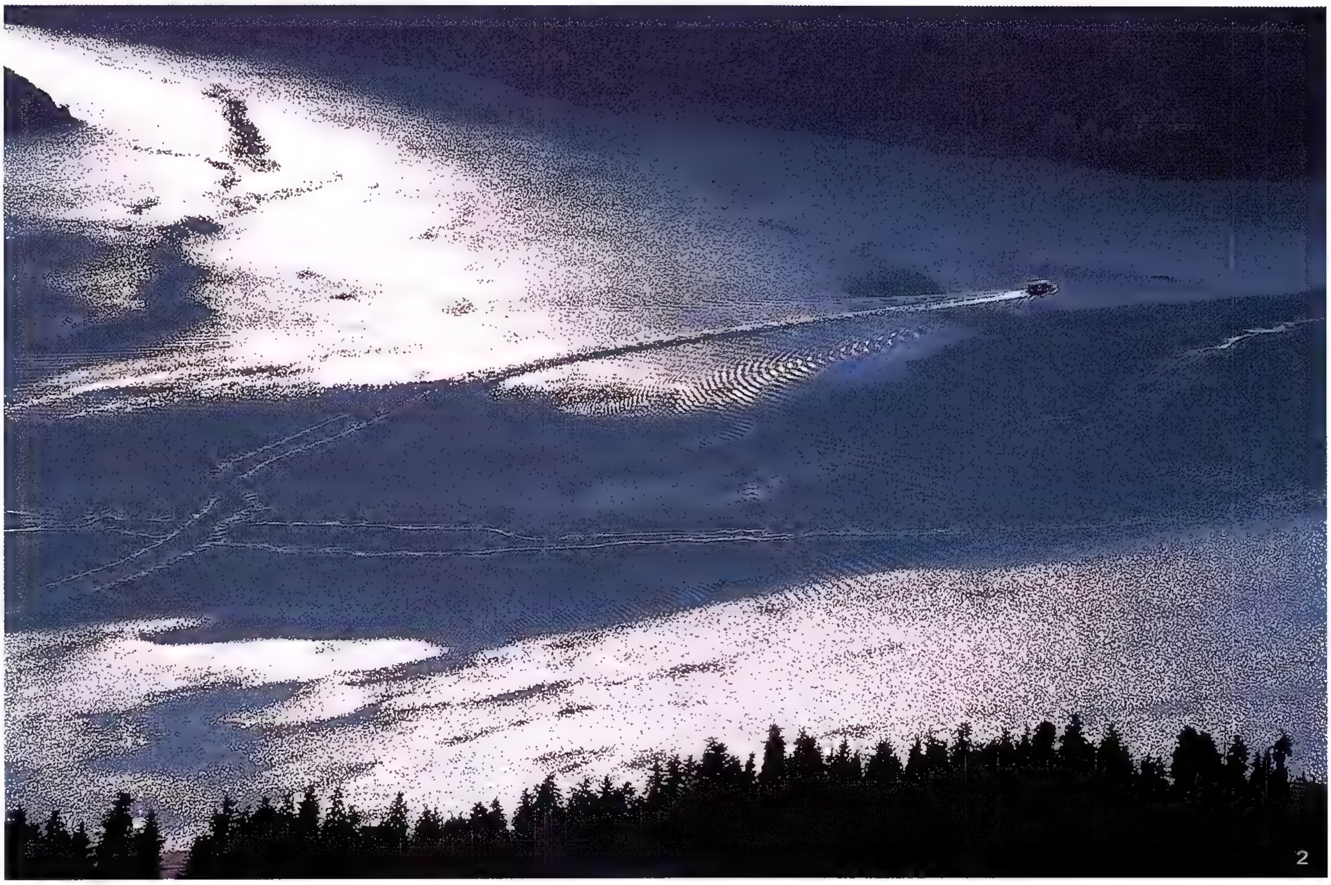
I suggested that we watch the weather report but was told that no TV signals reached Tianchi. Tuoken explained they had been watching a VCD. "The rain here won't last long," Saterhan comforted me.

Unique Pictures with a Slow Shutter

As I chatted with Saterhan in the late afternoon, Tuoken suddenly burst in, saying breathlessly that the weather had cleared up.

Outside, I was immediately immersed in extremely fresh air. On the slope near the sapphire Tianchi Lake several horses were





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grazing. In the distance, I could see mountain slopes covered in neatly-spaced, dark blue spruce. Halfway up the slopes was green grass and further up were snow-covered rocks. The setting sun magnificently spotlighted the towering Bogda Peak, which stood in sharp contrast with the lake, but unfortunately the peaks further west blocked the sunlight, casting a large shadow. The scene changed quickly as mist rose on the lake and blurred the reflection of the clouds and other subjects in the water, giving a more pleasant and lively view. Taking photos with a slow shutter to incorporate the flowing mist and clouds added a unique mysterious tone to the pictures.

Back in the yurt, Guli had cooked a pot of steaming noodle soup with spinach and mutton, seasoned with garlic and vinegar, and covered with a layer of red pepper oil. She said that this soup helps drive out the cold on rainy days. One bowl made me sweat all over and feel very comfortable.

Saterhan suggested that early the next morning we ride on horseback up the Tianshan Mountains where mushrooms

Previous page: Tianchi Lake in the morning

1. **Waterfalls at the foot of Tianshan Mountains (by Song Shijing)**
2. **Tianchi Lake, at 1,900 metres, covers an area of 2.8 square kilometres.**
3. **Water melted from the snow on Bogda Peak flows into Tianchi Lake, which irrigates the surrounding fields and pastureland.**
4. **Posing by the lake in Kazak costume**

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would be abundant. At the snow line he expected to find some snow lilies (*Saussurea involucrata*). So, Guli moved the table to one side and took out four quilts. We all slept in the same room in the shape of a fan around the fire.

Riding into the Mountains

In the morning Saterhan prepared everything quickly and smartly, like a soldier. It was still dark as he saddled the two horses. In the fresh humid air we rode into a dim pine forest, with pine needles that looked new after the rain. Fallen pine needles made our ride springy and smooth.

An hour later we arrived at Gangzi Mountain, from where the Tianchi Lake appeared bigger than the day before. Yet, I still had not seen the entire lake. When the sun rose over the peaks on the far side of the lake, the mountains and valleys became a shining green while the water turned a dazzling azure. Dense forests of huge spruce grew on the distant sheer mountains. The whole atmosphere was very peaceful. Saterhan took out the watermelon he had brought and cut it into thin pieces to share with me. Dotted all over the forest were many small blue flowers and white mushrooms as big as one's palm. In a short while, Saterhan picked a full bag of them. "Usually there are not so many. More sprouted in yesterday's rain," he said. To pick snow lilies, we would have to ride for another five or six hours so I decided on a boat trip on the lake instead.

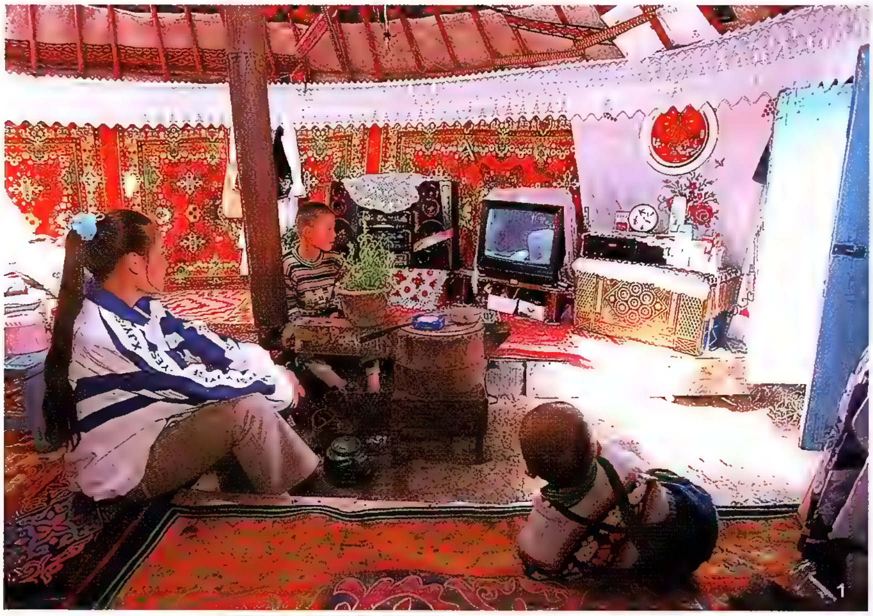
Tianchi Lake Irrigates Farmland

At Tianchi Lake, group after group of tourists got off the buses and went over the numerous stalls by the highway selling souvenirs and local products. Some stall owners were selling snow lilies. This flower has pure white petals and orange pistils, like a lotus flower; yet, its leaves were light green, like an unripe banana. I could smell a very pleasant, faint fragrance, like that of autumn chrysanthemums. The Kazak girl vendor told me that apart from its ornamental value, this flower is also a rare medicinal herb, effective for arthritis and anaemia. Soaked in liquor and water, it also helps altitude sickness.

On the lake the mountains and their reflections were connected as one until the motorboat cut a swathe through the beautiful picture. This glacier-formed highland lake is 1,900 metres above sea level, covers 2.8 square kilometres, and has an average depth of 40 metres. Its water comes from melting snow on the Bogda Peak and the lake irrigates large tracts of farmland.

The sky turned grim and it started to drizzle. The snow-covered peaks and trees gradually faded, leaving us with the image of a traditional Chinese landscape painting.

Translated by Z. G. Li



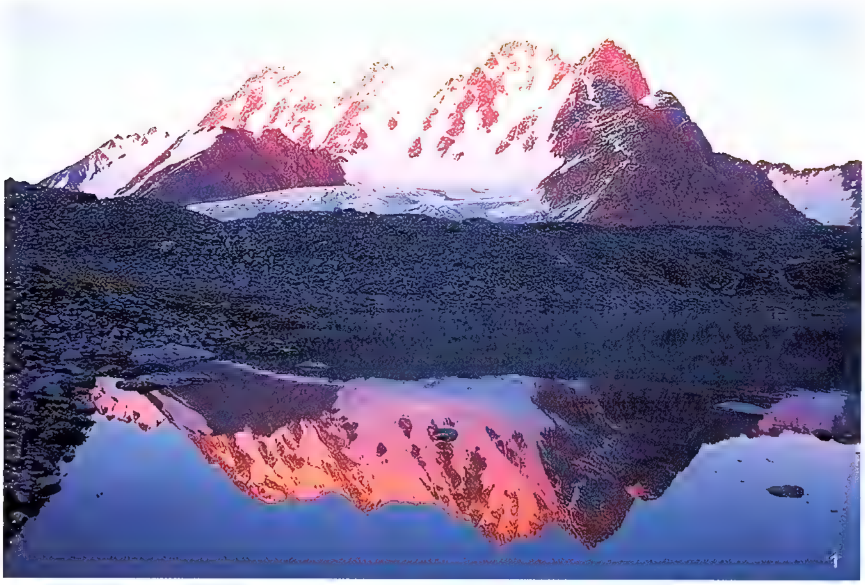
1. **Many local Kazaks have opened yurt inns provided with TV and Karaoke.**
2. **Kazaks are an ethnic group always on horseback.**
3. **It is a fresh experience to the tourists to stay in a Kazak yurt.**
4. **A gorgeous snow scene on the Tianchi Lake (by Sun Jiabin)**

4

Touring Xinjiang

Article by Cui Xiaoquan

TIPS FOR THE TRAVELLER



Xinjiang occupies one-sixth of the total territory of China and has various landforms. There are the lofty Tianshan Mountains, magnificent Kunlun Mountains, and golden Altay Mountains, vast sand seas and flat grasslands. It is a place of poetic sentiment with unique and rich ethnic customs, and historical sites along the ancient Silk Road. However, it is not possible to visit the whole of Xinjiang in one trip. The Silk Road alone has three routes — southern, central and northern — stretching 5,000 kilometres. So we introduce to you groups of scenic spots basically in northern Xinjiang with Urümqi, the regional capital, as the centre. July, August and September are the best months to visit Xinjiang.

URÜMQI AND SURROUNDING AREA

- **The city of Urümqi**: First, have a look around the city during the daytime, seeing sights such as the museum and its 3,000-year-old preserved corpse, Renmin Park, Hongshan (Red Hill) Park, Southern Great Mosque and Erdaoqiao Market for souvenirs. In the evening head for Wuyi Road Night Market to try various local foods and fruits, such as watermelons, Hami melons, seedless white grapes and apricots.
- **West Baiyang Gully**: It is 75 kilometres south of Urümqi, in the Nanshan Mountain Scenic Area on the northern slopes of the Tianshan Mountains. Vast dragon spruce forests and flat grassland fill the area, which is part of the Daxi Gully that contains five modern glaciers. Glacier No. 1 on the northern slope of Tianger Peak stretches 2.4 kilometres long and covers 1.85 square kilometres in area. It offers picturesque scenes of crystal glaciers, icy peaks, jagged mountains and glacial rivers.
- **Tianchi (Heavenly) Lake**: Located 120 kilometres east of Urümqi, the lake area, at 1,980 metres above sea level, is a place to enjoy landscapes dotted with dragon spruce forest and grassy slopes, as well as recreational activities such as boating and horse riding. The snow-capped Bogda Mountain in the distance enhances the beauty of the scenery. Kazak-run yurt inns offer lunch .

HISTORICAL SITES IN TURPAN

- **Gaochang, Thousand-Buddha Cave at Bozkeli, Asitana Hala, Zuogu Tombs, Jiaohe Ruins and Emin Pagoda**: These cultural relics and historical sites, all near Turpan, are worth visiting, and may take you one or two days.
- **Flaming Mountain, Karaz Well and Grape Valley**: Drive through the Flaming Mountain to see the "burning" red sandstone on your way to the Grape Valley and sample the grapes. Attend a Uygur song and dance performance in the evening under the grape trellises in the Turpan Hotel or Oasis Hotel. Karaz, a unique underground irrigation system which has been used since ancient times, can be found on your way from Turpan to Urümqi.
- **Aydingkol Lake and Dabancheng**: The Aydingkol Lake is 40 kilometres southwest of Turpan. On the way from Turpan to Urümqi, you will pass by Dabancheng, where Asia's largest wind power station stands in the desert.

ALONG THE URÜMQI-YINING HIGHWAY

- **Sayram Lake**: This highest and largest highland lake in Xinjiang is surrounded by grassland where you can experience staying in a Mongolian yurt and learn about the customs of your Mongolian hosts. In the seventh lunar month, you may enjoy the colourful Nadam Fair with horse racing, wrestling, and song and dance performances.
- **Guozigou (Fruit Gully) and Korgas**: Guozigou, as its name suggests, is a river valley covered with fruit trees. Sandwiched by tall mountains, it offers a gorgeous scenery. Korgas is a border city leading to Kazakhstan. Tourists with visas may cross the border for a day visit.
- **Yining** is a major city in western Xinjiang. Historical sites in the city and its outskirts include the Huiyuan Bell and Drum Tower, The General's Former Residence in Huiyuan, which was a Qing-dynasty military and political centre, and ancient mazars (tombs).
- **Ruins of Alimali**: The site of the ancient city Alimali is 90 kilometres northwest of Yining. Alimali was a famous city in Central Asia in the Song and Yuan dynasties, and the capital of the Mongolian Chahetai Khan Kingdom. Visit the mysterious Fire Dragon Cave on the way back.
- **Narat Grassland**: East of Yining, this grassland is home of the renowned Xinjiang sheep and Ili horse. Amid the dense greenery here you can see the Kazaks tending their herds.

TRANSPORT

- **Air**: There are regular flights to Urümqi from major cities in China, as well as some countries, including Russia, Kazakhstan, Pakistan, the United Arab Emirates, and Turkey.
- **Train**: There are also trains running to Urümqi from Xinjiang's bordering provinces of Gansu and Qinghai.

LONG-DISTANCE BUSES IN XINJIANG

Route	Distance (km)	Price (yuan)
Urümqi-Tianchi	120	30
Urümqi-Nanshan	75	15
Urümqi-Turpan	180	50
Urümqi-Sayram Lake	600	80
Urümqi-Yining	690	110
Yining-Xinyuan (Narat)	260	30
Xinyuan-Urümqi	460	60

Address of Long-distance Bus Station in Urümqi: 49 Heilongjiang Road; Tel: 581 3487.

There are also tourist buses from Urümqi to Nanshan Scenic Area, Glacier No. 1, Tianchi Lake and Turpan, which start at the front and rear gates of the People's Park.

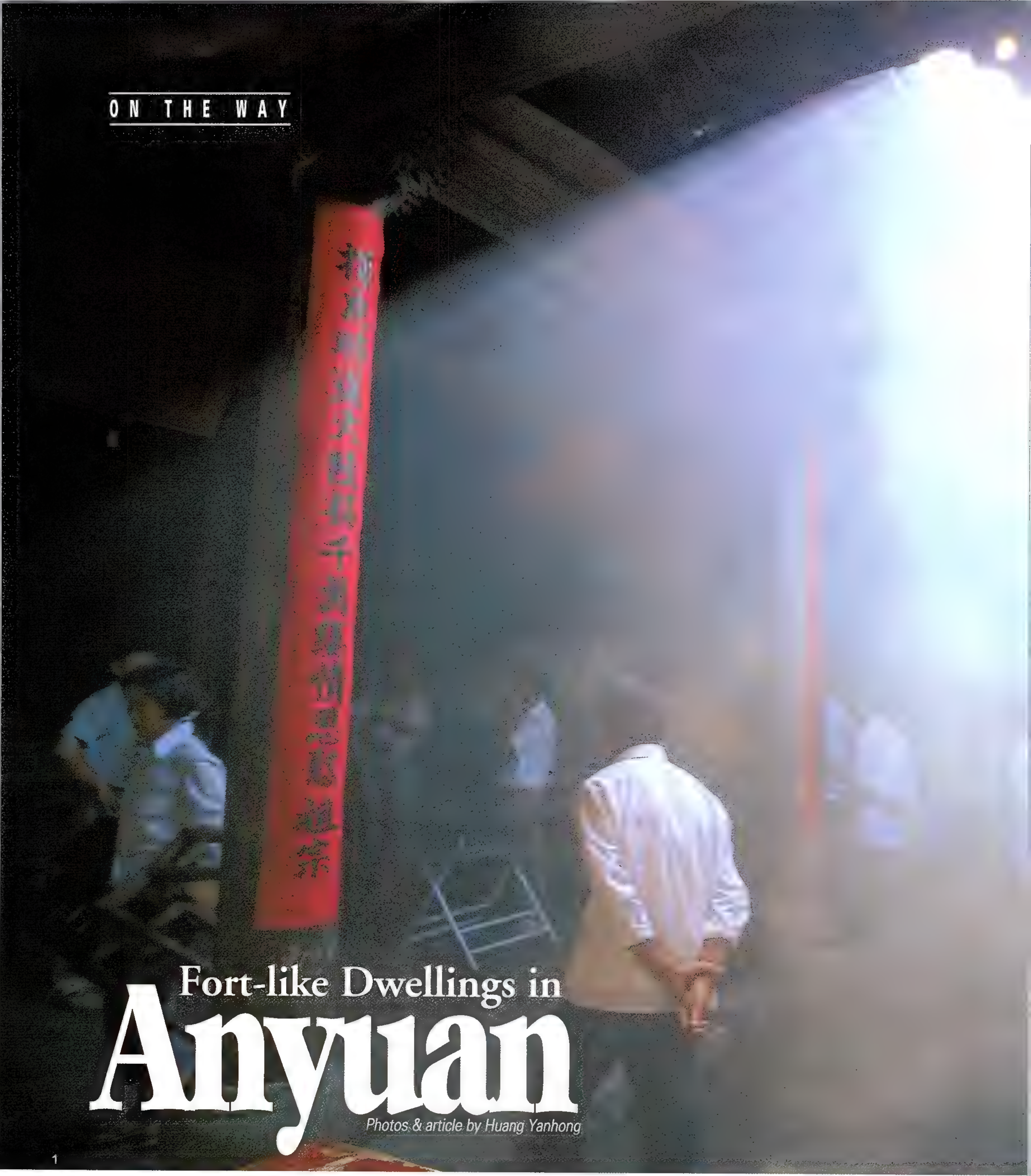
For information on flights and hotels, see "Executive's Memo" on p.84.

Translated by M.Q.

1. Bogda Peak
2. On the Künes Grassland
3. Tianchi Lake
4. Sayram Lake
5. Turpan
6. A train going from Asia to Europe through Xinjiang (by Song Shijing)
7. Narat Grassland

Fort-like Dwellings in Anyuan

Photos & article by Huang Yanhong



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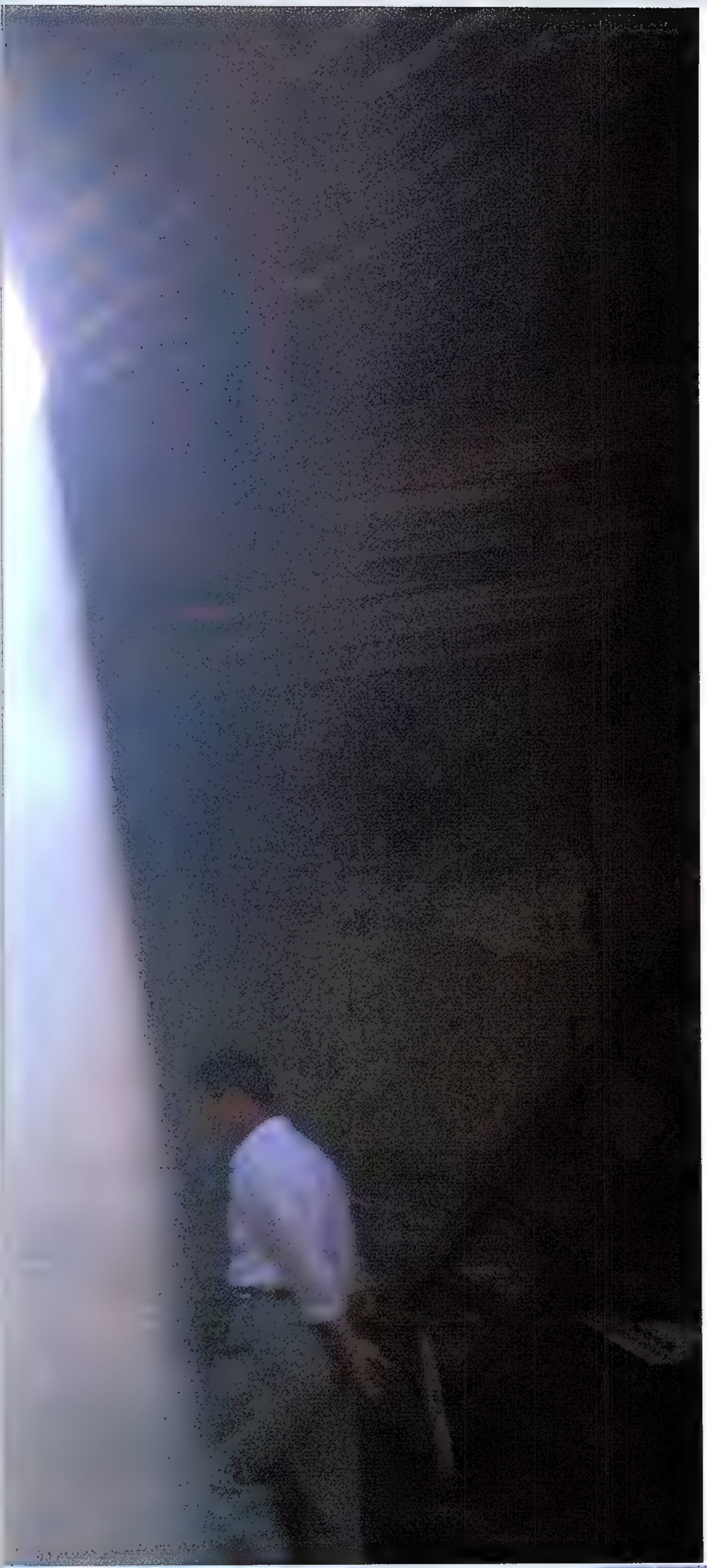
While on a trip to Anyuan in southern Jiangxi Province to see the Sanbai (Three Hundred) Mountain, the source of the East River, I met two friends on the mountain. They had just been to see the fort-like residential dwellings in Anyuan. This aroused my curiosity, and so, I got into their dusty jeep and went down the mountain together with them.

Called *tuweizi* (earthen enclosure), these local residences are similar to those called *tulou* (earthen building) in Fujian Province. An earthen enclosure is usually a square structure built of rammed earth or bricks.



Huozhuan Enclosure

Imposing and Impregnable

The 70-year-old Mr. Wei revealed his disabled fingers. "I was wounded by cannon fire," he said animatedly as he recounted his experience on the Korean battlefield decades ago. The gunfire he had experienced was similar to what his own residence had gone through.

He talked about his enclosure with the same enthusiasm. Built with bricks, as its name, Huozhuan (Fire-Brick), indicates, it is big and obviously superior to those built of rammed earth. Mr. Wei said that the first storey alone required 130,000 bricks. During construction about 300 years ago, a geomancer predicted that the enclosure would be subjected to fire, thunderbolts and robbery. Indeed, it all happened, and as well, it was attacked by the Red Army led by General Yang Chengwu. The armed gentry there fought back stubbornly and it was only with inside help that the Red Army eventually succeeded in breaking into it. Bullet holes are still visible in the walls today.

The Huozhuan enclosure was an imposing, castle-like structure. With the passing of the years and lack of maintenance, however, it is dilapidated today. Over 30 families used to live there, but now there are only a few.

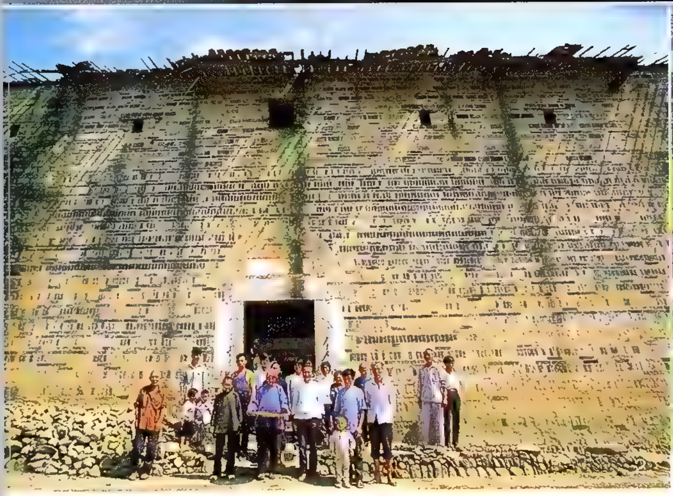
Zunshan Enclosure

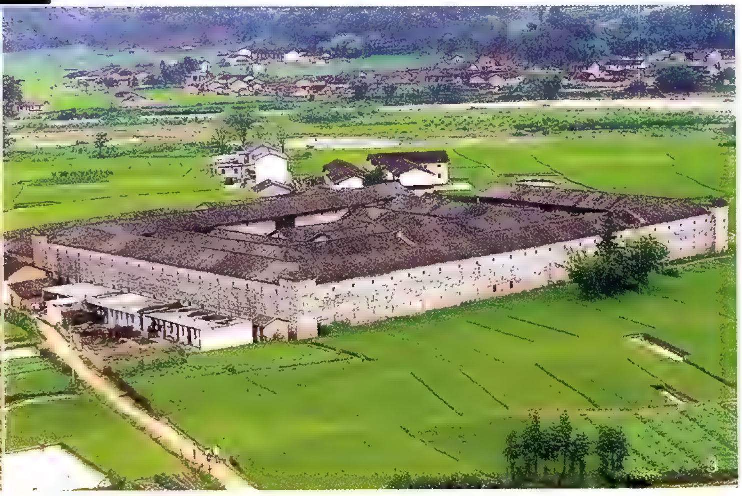
Destroyed 67 Years Ago

Of all the enclosures, the Zunshan suffered the saddest fate. It was built in 1861 of the Qing Dynasty, with local stones from the riverbed.

When we drove to it, we could see even from the highway that a few broken walls sprouting grass were all that remained. The ground enclosed by the walls was planted with crops. The enclosure was totally destroyed during the Second Revolutionary Civil War. One day in July 1933, the enclosure was surrounded by the Kuomintang army. The Communist-led Red Guard inside put up a strong defence. The siege went on for two months and the enclosure was not taken until the Kuomintang army brought in aircraft and big cannons. The 100-odd people inside, including children, were all taken to the nearby Chigang Ridge and shot.

Young Xu, who had taken us there, said he heard the story 20 years ago as a seven-year-old pupil, when an elderly man came to the school to talk about the local history.





Dexing Enclosure

Abandoned for 60 Years

The Dexing enclosure is built in picturesque surroundings close to a mountain. But no one dares live in it. The enclosing walls are high and strong and the gate is locked. We were told that the village head had the key, but when we found him, he refused to open it, saying the key was lost. He seemed afraid that ghosts and bad luck would come out if he unlocked the gate.

This made us more curious. Peeping through the cracks in the gate, we saw a gloomy picture inside, overgrown with tall grass. From the villagers we learned that the Dexing enclosure was built 100 years ago. When the owner, named Chen, invited a geomancer to examine the configuration, Chen's child mischievously smeared chicken waste on the geomancer's moustache. Maliciously, the geomancer suggested sinking the well outside the enclosure.

From then on, the people in the enclosure never had a day of peace. Diseases and natural disasters followed one after another but they did not know the cause of their misfortune. Forty years later, when they understood it was caused by the bad geomantic influence, they all moved out and began to live a healthy and happy life. Believe the story or not, but all 50 houses of the enclosure have been empty for 60 years.

Xiufeng Enclosure

Selling for 10,000 Yuan

The Xiufeng enclosure, over 100 years old, was quite big, but in shabby condition. It has two gates. The southern gate used to have a geomantic problem which, the villagers believed, had a bad effect on their fortune. At the geomancer's suggestion, they moved the door hinges so that it faced a different direction.

When we walked into the enclosure, a few villagers were cooling themselves by the gate. Seeing how curious we were, one villager about 40 years old said to me, "You can have it for 10,000 yuan." It was a tempting offer. If the enclosure could be transformed into a holiday village for visitors to the Sanbai Mountain, it would surely make money.

2

We made a complete tour of the enclosure but saw few people. Returning to the gate, we asked the villagers why it was so. "People who have become richer have all moved out. There are only three households left," they said. It seemed that changing the gate's direction had indeed brought good fortune to the inhabitants. When the last household moves out, the enclosure will probably be turned into a vegetable plot.

As we were leaving, I jokingly offered to buy the horizontal board hung above the gate, but the villager said, "I don't dare sell it. It is the property of the clan."

Tangwu Enclosure

Welcoming Relatives from Taiwan

From a distance, we could see the Tangwu enclosure standing in a vast green field. Construction began with the 13th generation of the Tang family and did not finish until its 32nd generation, 300 years later. The geomantic layout is that of an ancient coin, a circular exterior enclosing a central square. Even the ground is paved with mosaics of pebbles in coin shape. During the most prosperous period, 500 people lived in the enclosure. Over 100 now remain, which is better than most other enclosures.

Our visit to the enclosure coincided with the arrival of a Tang-family relative from Taiwan, which brought the whole enclosure to life. He had served with the Kuomintang's military intelligence and before retirement, he was the governor of the Penghu Islands. Escorted by a big crowd of relatives, he walked through the gate still painted with Red Army slogans. The passing of time had melted away the old enmity; what remained were increasingly closer blood ties.

A welcoming ceremony held in the Tang family temple was punctuated by firecrackers and attracted a large crowd. The couplet pasted on the door frame read:

Choosing a fine day and travelling in big steps to cheer the ancestors with thousands of strands of tender feelings;

Picking a prosperous time and crossing the sea to return to the home village after a longing of fifty years.

The old man from Taiwan had strong feelings for his home village.

Previous page

1. The family temple in the Tangwu enclosure is enlivened when a relative from Taiwan comes to visit his home village.
2. Only a few families now live in this brick enclosure called Huozhuan.
3. From a distance, the Dongsheng enclosure resembles an impenetrable castle.

1. Huozhuan enclosure stands as before even after 300 years of wind and rain, wars and riots.
2. Inside an abandoned enclosure
3. The vestibule of the Tangwu enclosure is a gathering place for villagers.
4. Dexing, the enclosure no one dares to live in
5. The green countryside is studded with ancient enclosures.

3

He remembered a lot about the village during his childhood, but he seemed sad about the dilapidation of the ancient enclosure.

Misheng Enclosure

The Smallest in Jiangxi

It was not easy to find Misheng, the smallest enclosure. We inquired continually until we realised we were already staring at its broken walls. It was indeed very small, only about 15 metres on each side. No wonder that people appropriately called it Misheng, the smallest of rice measures. It was even smaller than the Bai (White) enclosure of 17 metres square in Longnan County, which is generally acknowledged as the smallest in Jiangxi. Built in 1851, wholly with rammed earth, it was a three-storied structure housing over a dozen families. In its centennial year, the building became unstable and collapses began to occur here and there. In 1958, all the families moved out, leaving it as a cow enclosure. Two years later, it became unsafe even for the cows and was turned into a vegetable plot.

The enclosure does not have a single undamaged room. There are broken walls, and only the lower half of the watchtowers at the four corners remain. The front gate, however, is intact. Framed with three huge stone slabs, it is equipped with an ingeniously designed secret catch that prevented outsiders from opening the gate.

4

Seeing visitors at their former residence, the folks who had lived there came over one after another. All of them bear the family name of Zhong. One old man told us that Mao Zedong had once passed through their place.

Today, many of the former residents have moved out of the old enclosures; their new houses are more spacious, but also occupy more cultivated land. While the old enclosures are being abandoned, the traditional clan style of living is also vanishing. One way to preserve these ancient enclosures would be to convert them into scenic spots, as part of an overall Sanbai Mountain tour program.

Tips for the Traveller

Transport: Trains running along the Beijing-Kowloon Railway stop at Xinfeng. From Xinfeng (New Harvest), long-distance buses go to Anyuan in about two hours. There are 200 such enclosures in the county. Those mentioned here are on the way from the county town of Anyuan to Xinfeng (New Wind) Township at the foot of Sanbai Mountain. The Misheng enclosure is farther away in Kongtian Township and requires a special trip.

Accommodation: Standard room at Anyuan Hotel costs 90 yuan.

5

Zigong

The Millenary Salt Capital

Photos & article by Yao Gang

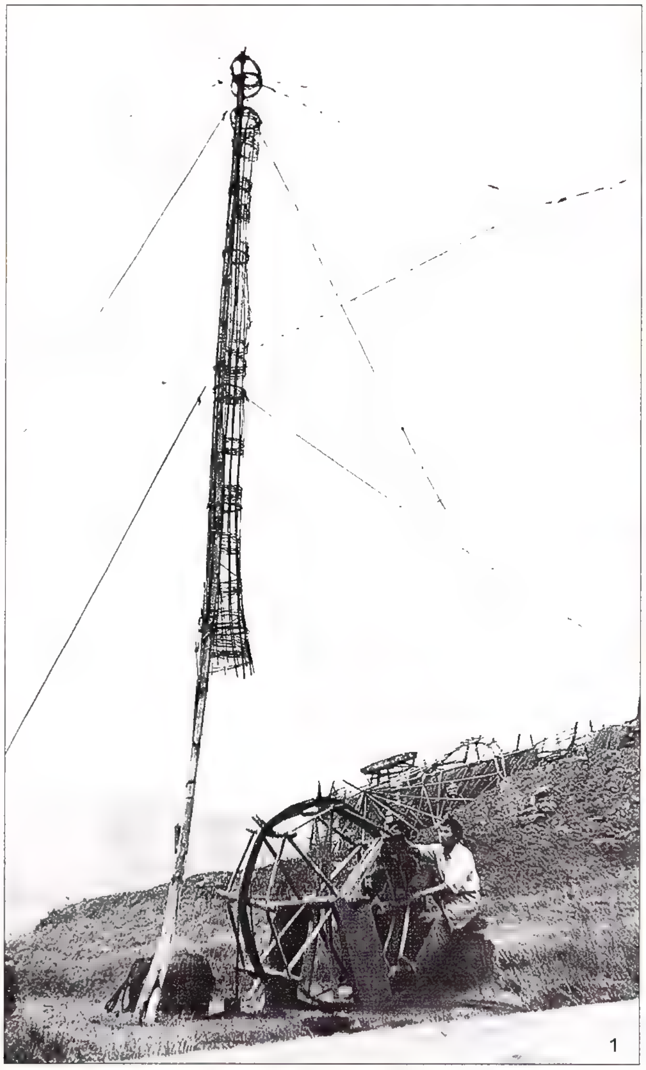
Salt is commonly linked with the sea. Yet since my childhood, I knew that in the inland regions salt had to be extracted from wells in Zigong, Sichuan Province. Since Zigong lies in a mountainous area far from the sea and bereft of salt lakes, the hard-working Sichuan people dug wells to extract brine for salt. Over a period of 2,000 years, Zigong has developed into a city upon salt pits. As the largest well salt production centre in China, it has long been known as "the thousand-year-old salt capital".

A City Built on Two Salt Fields

This local legend describes Zigong's well salt history: In the early Jin Dynasty (265-420), a local hunter named Mei Ze saw some animals licking dew from a rock. Finding the dew was salty, he dug a well at the spot. At about 100 metres depth, brine gushed out. He went into business producing salt from the brine for the local people. When Mei Ze died, the imperial court ordered a memorial hall built for him and bestowed him with the titles of duke and prince posthumously. Since then, Mei Ze has been worshipped as the Well God of Zigong.

In fact, records show that salt production began even earlier in Zigong. Its first salt well, Fushi (Prospering the World), was dug in the Eastern Han Dynasty (25-220). The well was so named for its large output and huge profits. During the Northern and Southern Dynasties (420-589), the Dagong Salt Well was dug. Like Fushi and Dagong, salt wells dug between the Han and Tang (618-907) dynasties all had wide mouths, like ordinary water wells. As a wide mouth cost more to make and was prone to collapse, they were mostly very shallow.

In the Northern Song Dynasty (960-1127), Zigong's salt production developed dramatically due to the invention of the percussion drilling method. With the new technology, the wells were dug with a smaller mouth in a way that saved time and land. In the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644), artesian brine wells were dug along the Rongxi River banks northwest of the city. From these wells, brine gushed out automatically due to the



1. An ancient well in operation (by Miao Ziping)
2. The wheel used for lifting brine from the well (by Miao Ziping)
3. The sealed mouth of an old salt well (by Miao Ziping)
4. A stone carving depicting salt production in Zigong

pressure of the natural gas underground, which itself was used as a cheap fuel to boil the brine. Salt production thus entered a new stage.

Along with the salt industry, Zigong's population, including merchants, grew rapidly. In the Tang Dynasty, salt profits made up a great part of the imperial revenue. By the early Qing Dynasty (1644-1911), the salt tax revenue in Zigong had surpassed land taxes to take top place.

In the mid-1800s, the rebellious Taiping Heavenly Army took Nanjing for their capital. Since this prevented transport of salt produced in the east coast up the Yangtse River to Hunan and Hubei, the Qing imperial court ordered salt produced in Sichuan to be shipped down the river to the two provinces. Thus Zigong entered a golden age and rapidly developed into Sichuan's well salt industry centre. Already known as "the richest and

Story of Mozi (Grindstone) Well

Around 1850, a Shaanxi salt merchant drilled a salt well in Zigong. Despite huge expenses, he failed because the drill hit a stratum of hard rock. He declared bankruptcy, but to express his gratitude to the workers, he sold the family grindstone to hold a banquet. Moved by his attitude, the workers made another try and unexpectedly broke through the rock without much effort. The Mozi Well, with a natural gas output large enough to heat 300 salt-producing cauldrons, made the merchant a great fortune.

Wangye (Prince) Temple

The Longfeng Hill in the centre of Zigong resembles a treasure boat. In its middle, where the boat's mast would stand, Shaanxi merchants built a tower called the Xiqin (West Qin) Temple. Fearing that the Shaanxi merchants might remove Zigong's salt fortune, the native salt merchants built the Wangye Temple at the front of the boat and erected tall poles over it to stop the outflow of good fortune. On the roof of the temple's well-preserved main hall, there is a sculptured arrowhead pointing to the Xiqin Temple. Wangye Temple is said to be one metre higher than the Xinqin Temple

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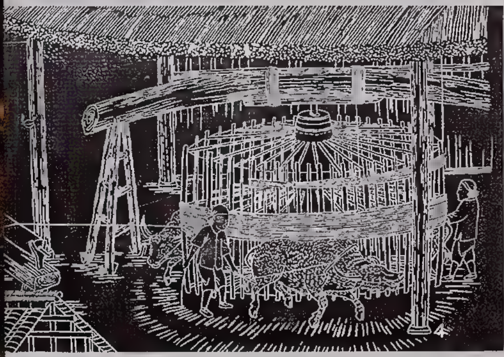
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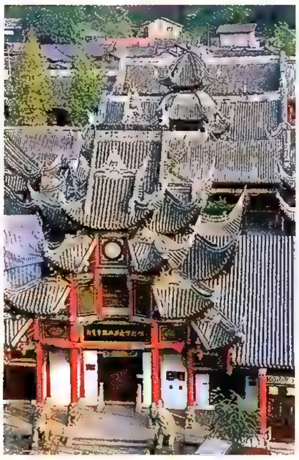
most populous place in central Sichuan", Zigong gained another name, the Salt Capital.

In the early Qing Dynasty, two organisations separately administered affairs regarding the artesian wells (*ziliujing*) and tribute wells (*gongjing*). During the War of Resistance Against Japan, the supply of sea salt from China's coastal areas was cut off and the area's salt industry got another chance for development. On September 1, 1939, the two salt fields of artesian wells and tribute wells merged, and the city of Zigong came into being.



China's Fifth Great Invention

In the Qing Dynasty, important breakthroughs were made in salt well drilling with the invention of new techniques for well digging, salvage, wall mending and dredging. Changes in drilling technology made it possible to drill wells over 1,000 metres deep. In the Zigong area, wells must be over 800 metres deep to reach the most rich salt terrain with the black brine and abundant natural gas. After the Shenhai Well, most salt wells dug during the later Qing Dynasty were around 1,000 metres deep. The Changfa Well reached 1,045 metres. Black brine wells could each produce thousands of kilograms of salt.

Wells of that time with a high natural gas output included the Haishun Well, which had sufficient natural gas to heat 700 huge cauldrons for salt production; the Mozi Well, which produced 150,000 cubic metres of natural gas daily; and the Decheng Well, with output of a few hundred tons of brine and enough natural gas to heat 500 cauldrons daily. Such wells were rarely seen in any other salt works of China at that time. The advanced deep well-drilling technology used in Zigong's artesian wells is known world-wide as the "father of modern well-drilling technology" as well as the "forerunner of the world's petroleum industry". Therefore, this technology is regarded as China's fifth great invention after gunpowder, movable block printing, the compass and paper-making.

Uniquely Processed Beef of the Salt Capital

The most unique local dishes of Zigong are made of beef. This may be due to the widespread use of oxen as draught animals in the ancient salt fields. During the heyday of salt production there were over 100,000 draught oxen in Zigong.

Since beef in Zigong was cheap, the salt workers often boiled thin slices of beef and ate them with red pepper sauce. In the 1930s, Fan Ji'an, a famous Zigong cook, made Boiled Beef a popular local speciality.

Dried Beef, processed with meat from the rear thighs, is another local delicacy. The thinly sliced beef is marinated in salt and soy sauce before being dried naturally on bamboo fences and baked over a slow cow-dung fire. Beef thus processed appears bright red and transparent. When eaten with red pepper oil, it has a unique, lingering faint aroma.

The percussion drilling tools developed in Zigong best symbolise the great achievements made in well drilling. Displayed in the Zigong Salt Museum is a complete set of such tools, including 20 kinds of drills to cut through different types of rock. These drills, called *cuo*, were made in various shapes and specifications to meet almost all demands in the drilling operation.

Qing-dynasty Salt Production

Through the line drawings included in the Qing-dynasty *Records of Salt Production* and old photos, people can envisage the well salt production then. The main techniques involved in drilling a well included determining the location, cutting the mouth, cutting the bore-hole, widening the shaft and inserting the wooden walls. The location depended on an experienced worker's good judgement of the distribution of the brine and gas.

The diameter of the mouth was the same as the diameter of the bore-hole, usually ranging between 90 and 110 cm. A

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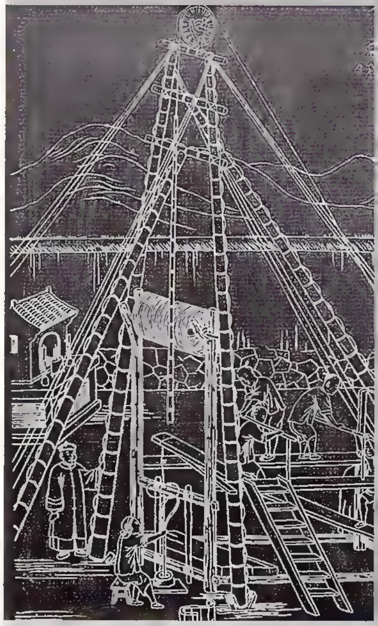
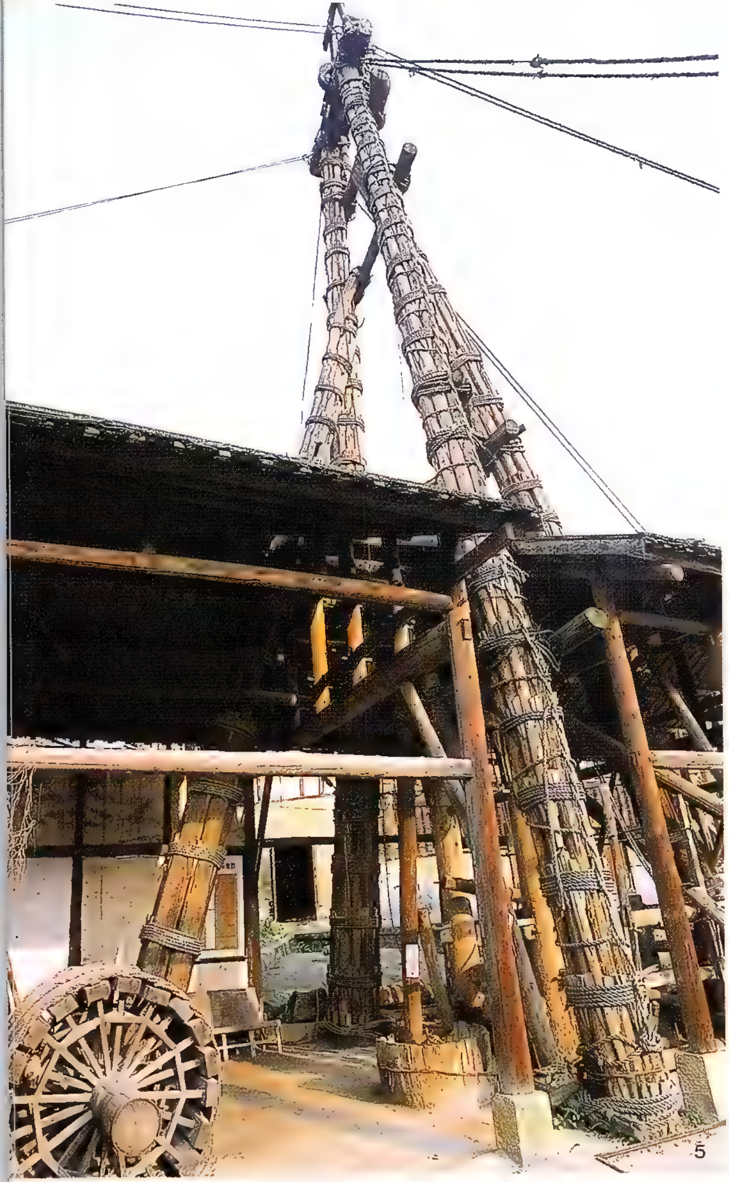


stone ring, square outside and round inside and slightly larger than the mouth, was fixed in place with mud and rock. Next, a drill rig and winch were erected over it. Workers continuously rotated the drill bit, which pounded and crushed the hard rock below. As the bit was hoisted up, the tube full of mud was changed to remove debris. When the hole ran through the white-water layer and into the hard rock for about two metres, another kind of drill was used to widen the shaft of the bore-hole until its diameter reached that of the stone ring's interior. During this operation, the drill shaft was fixed in place to prevent any slant.



Halves of hollowed out fir logs, two metres long, were fitted into the well shaft to prevent fresh water seeping in and causing collapse. The cutting of the bore-hole through

Notes About Salt

As early as in the Stone Age, the Chinese people found that salt added flavour to food. Later, salt became a precious tribute to the imperial court. In ancient Greece, salt was offered to the gods to show piety. In ancient Britain, officials having meals with the king were seated a certain distance from the salt cake according to their ranks. In ancient Europe, one's ear would be cut off for taking more than one's share of salt.

Today, the Russians still use bread and salt to treat distinguished guests. In rural Hungary, when a new house is built, salt is scattered inside and outside in a ceremonial gesture.

Salt once played the function of money. For instance, in China's Yunnan, Tibet and Inner Mongolia, salt was once equal to cash. In the remote areas of Yunnan, such "cash" was used up until the years of the Republic. Rome's ancient army also used salt to pay the soldiers, which gave rise to the word "salary".

In Chinese history, wars over salt were numerous. Salt, always under state control, has played an important role in the country's economy. Until fairly modern times, the salt tax had been one of the three major sources of state revenue.

Salt can be classified, according to its raw materials, into sea salt, lake salt, well salt and mineral salt. Well salt is produced by the boiling and crystallisation of the brine obtained from deep wells. Zigong, China's most important well salt producer, accounts for one-third of the national total output of well salt. Mineral salt is also produced in Zigong by injecting water into the wells.

By method of production, salt is classified as vacuum salt, brine-steamed salt, sun-dried salt and crushed salt. China's vacuum well salt is the best quality. In the Qing Dynasty, there were two kinds of salt from Zigong — rock-hard Ba (Sichuan) salt and grainy Hua (flowery) salt.

1. **The Xiqin Temple with up-turned eaves and gorgeously painted pillars is a typical structure of its kind found in southern China.**
2. **Square cauldrons used at the salt field in Da'an (by Miao Ziping)**
3. **A stone carving depicting the rig used in ancient times**
4. **The drilling and well-building tools displayed in the Zigong Salt Museum**
5. **The tall rig used at Dongyuan Well**
6. **Wangye Temple was where people prayed for the safety of ships.**

hard rock was the most difficult job. It took several to a dozen years to cut such a bore-hole.

The ancient artisans succeeded in digging well after well. Over 2,000 years, more than 13,000 brine and natural gas wells have been dug in Zigong.

A Magnificent Network

Since the Qing Dynasty, the depth and diameter of the brine and natural gas wells have kept increasing and pipes used to remove the brine have become bigger. Moreover, the extraction rigs made of fir logs, popularly known as *tianche* or overhead cranes, grew taller and taller. The 113-metre rig over the Dade Well was the highest wooden structure in China at that time and a miracle in the history of China's science and technology. The brine extraction rig over the Shenhai Well resembles an inverted cart, functioning similarly to a modern winch. Though it appears primitive, it is very effective and safe.

Since the distribution of brine and natural gas in the area was not even, bamboo pipes and pools were used for long-distance transport of the brine. Such a network looks as magnificent as the modern pipelines. The water-raising towers raised the level of the brine and piped it over mountains and hills, functioning like modern water towers and pumping stations.

The artesian well natural gas field, which was first developed during the Ming Dynasty with bamboo, timber, mud and rock, was the world's first natural gas field exploited on a large scale. The low-pressure natural gas extraction technique created here is still widely used today.

Unique Brine Wells

Among the numerous brine wells in Zigong, some have quite unique features. A well called Tianhai has two holes at the bottom, a straight one that produces yellow brine, and a defective one that produces black brine. With experience and skill, the salt workers could easily extract the yellow and black brine alternately.

The Deyuan and Sanyuan wells are both located in the Zhulin (Bamboo Forest) Bay. The digging of both wells started on the same day in 1890 and reached the brine stratum on exactly the same day 12 years later.

With a history of over 200 years, the Xiaoqiao Well has a diameter of only 7.3 cm and is typical of salt wells built in the early Qing Dynasty. Sitting on the eastern bank of the Fuxi River where Zigong's first artesian wells are believed to have been located, this well has now become a tourist site.

First 1,000-Metre-Deep Well

Not far from the Zigong-Neijiang Highway in Da'an of Zigong is the Shenhai Well, an ancient salt well that has been listed as a key relic under state protection. Dug down over 1,000 metres in 1835, it set a record at the time for being the first well in the world at that depth. At that time, the average depth of the 120 brine wells dug in Kannawha River Valley, U.S.A., was only 115.8 metres. It was not until 1845 that the deepest brine well, at 518 metres, was dug in that area and set a record in the United States. Eleven years after the Shenhai Well was dug, the first oil well was drilled in Russia, producing a small amount of oil.

The Shenhai Well, the first well made with the percussion drilling method, marked the maturity of well-drilling technology in ancient China. In a deed that still seems unimaginable, several dozen people worked the drill to reach 1,001.42 metres in depth. Blow-out occurred

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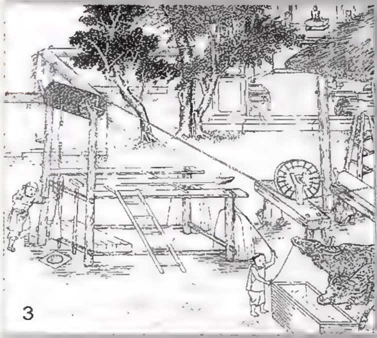


when the digging was first completed, producing 8,500 cubic metres of natural gas and 14 cubic metres of black brine a day. The gas was used to heat 80 cauldrons for salt production. The well operated until 1995 and now serves as a site for scientific research and tourism.

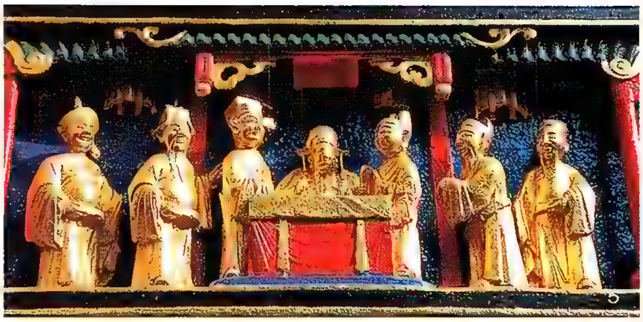
In its yard, the lofty overhead crane still stands and the 16-dipper brine extraction frame operates smoothly. Visitors can still feel the ancient atmosphere.

Prolific 100-Year-Old Well

The Dongyuan Well, dug at the foot of the Datang Hill, was finished in 1893. It is unique in that it today still gives a high output of brine and natural gas. When the winch pulls up a bucket, a salt worker tips it with a special hook to pour out the black brine, demonstrating a century-old scene of well salt production.

The drilling of the Dongyuan Well went on intermittently for 46 years. The well produced a little natural gas when it reached 300 metres and began showing black brine at 700 metres. However, large amounts of natural gas were only obtained at 935 metres. Over the past century, the well has produced over 500 million cubic metres of natural gas, together with a daily output of over 2,000 kilograms of black brine, ranking it the best of all brine/gas wells in Zigong. Two important notebooks with detailed data about this well are on display in the Zigong Salt Museum.

Translated by Z. G. Li



1. Well salt produced in Da'an, Zigong (by Miao Ziping)
2. Inside a salt storeroom in Da'an (by Miao Ziping)
3. A drawing about well-salt production of the Qing Dynasty
4. Dongyuan Well keeps productive today. (by Miao Ziping)
5. Gold-plated wooden sculptures in the Hall of Loyal Justice
6. A sculpture displayed in the Zigong Salt Museum (by Miao Ziping)

Tips for the Traveller

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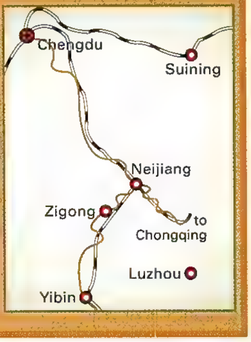


Pilgrimage Around

Mount Bonri and Lake Dangra

Photos & article by Christoph Baumer

Bon is the old indigenous religion of Tibet. The traditions of Bon were widespread in the snow land a long time before Buddhism became popular during the reign of King Trisong Detsen (762-797). Today, about three percent of Tibetans are Bonpo, or believers of Bon. Like the Buddhists, they perform pilgrimages around holy mountains and lakes, which are called khora in Tibetan. Two of the most important khoras for the Bonpo are those around Mount Bonri in Kongpo and around Lake Dangra in the Qiangtang Plateau.

Pervious page, main photo:
Meditation chapel of U Wun Gonpa
Small photo:
The door cover at Tagzê Yungdrungling with its religious emblem

1. **The Bonpo deity Kunzang Gyalwa Dupa, at Tagdrosa Gonpa, Bonri, who is believed to have five heads and 10 arms. He embodies the victorious aspect of the supreme deity Kunto Zangpo.**
2. **This Kongpo nomad moves his yaks to a new pasture four times a year.**
3. **The top of Bonri Pass overlooking the Yarlung Zangbo River 1,600 metres below**

On an early October morning, with my Tibetan friend Pasang, I left the small town of Ningchi east of Gongbo'gyamda which is situated on the Lhasa-Chengdu highway. Heavy dark clouds were hanging over the town and concealing holy Mount Bonri from our view. Our goal was Sigyal Gonpa, the first of the seven Bonpo monasteries along the 60-kilometre circumambulation route around Mount Bonri.

In the Footsteps of Tonpa Shenrab, Founder of Bon

It rained when we left Ningchi, but the rain turned into snow when we started our ascent from the foot of Mount Bonri. After two hours of tedious walking in the wet snow we lost our way. Thick fog had descended from the mountain and reduced the visibility to less than five metres. We were rather at a loss about what to do, and then a young monk suddenly appeared out of the fog. We were really lucky, because he was a Bonpo lama from Sigyal Gonpa and was going to Ningchi. Having explained that I had come from Switzerland to Tibet in order to perform the Bonri khora, he changed his plan and offered not only to return with us to his monastery but even to accompany us during the whole circumambulation! Thanks to our new friend, Tenzing, we had a warm welcome in all Bonpo monasteries and were treated as true pilgrims.

While drinking a hot cup of wonderful Tibetan tea in the kitchen of the Sigyal Gonpa, I listened to the explanations of the abbot, Khenpo Khasrub Nyima. According to him, the Bonpo believe that their religion was founded more than 18,000 years ago by Tonpa Shenrab Miwoche. Tonpa means teacher, Shenrab means eminent priest and Miwoche, exceptional man. Tonpa Shenrab was born in Shang Shung, which corresponds to today's Ngari in western Tibet. Before becoming Buddhists, all Tibetans were Bonpo. Buddhism only spread among the Tibetan people after the missionary work of Guru Rinpoche about 1,220 years ago. At that time Trisong Detsen was the king of Tibet. He strongly favoured Buddhism and ordered the building of the monastery of Samya. Then, in the year 785, he organised a debate between the Bonpo master Drenpa Namkha and the Buddhist teachers Guru Rinpoche and Santaraksita. Trisong Detsen declared the Buddhists as winners and ordered all Bonpo priests of Tibet to either become Buddhists or to leave central Tibet. This is the reason that we find Bonpo either only in remote regions such as around Dangra Lake and Mount Bonri and far away, in Amdo and Kham.

This view contradicts the Buddhist belief that Buddhism had already spread in Tibet under the Tubo king, Songtsan Gambo (609-650). But many Chinese and Western scientists are convinced that the adherence to Buddhism was initially limited to a few members of the Tubo royal family and nobility. While nobody doubts that the two foreign wives of Songtsan Gambo, namely the Chinese princess Wencheng and the Nepalese princess Brikhuti, were devout Buddhists, it remains doubtful that Songtsan Gambo had really embraced Buddhism even though he commissioned several Buddhist shrines,

including the Jokhang Monastery in Lhasa.

We know that up to the time of Trisong Detsen the whole nobility and most of the people were Bonpo. Judging from the funerals of the Tubo kings, which included the sacrifice of dozens of horses and other animals, we can conclude that the ancestors of King Trisong Detsen were not true Buddhists.

Along the Yarlung Zangbo River

The next day we left Sigyal Gonpa and descended to Tagzê Yungdrungling Gonpa, which is not far from the northern shore of the Yarlung Zangbo River. The mighty river is honoured by the Bonpo, for it links two holy mountains of Bon: in the west the Yungdrung Gutse — called Kailash by the Buddhists — and Bonri in the east.

In Tagzê we met Abbot Khenpo Nyan Khyab who told us the story of the Bonri khora: "Our main sacred book, *Zermig*, says that Khyapa Laring, the prince of demons, kidnapped Tonpa Shenrab's daughter and his seven celestial horses, and hid them in Kongpo. Tonpa Shenrab went in pursuit to Kongpo from his home in Shang Shung and defeated Khyapa Laring based on his superior magic skills in an epic battle in the area of Mount Bonri. In memory of this event our holy Bonpo teacher Ripa Druksa opened the khora in 1330 and founded Sigyal Gonpa, where his mortal remains are kept in the stupa of the main hall. But while Sigyal is the oldest gonpa on the khora, Tagzê Yungdrungling is the most honoured for it owns a very precious relic, a tooth of Tonpa Shenrab."

After Tagzê, for a while, the khora borders the northern shore of the Yarlung Zangbo and, at a place called Miyul Tri Durtro, leads to the tomb of Grigum Tsenpo. Grigum was Tibet's first mortal king and the eighth altogether since Nyatri Tsenpo had descended from heaven to Mount Bonri to guide and rule the Tibetans. Tradition says that Grigum was killed by his minister Lonam about 2,000 years ago, because he had tried to reduce the power of the Bonpo clergy and the nobility. His tomb in the shape of a huge earth barrow is probably the oldest of its kind in Tibet. It looks the same as those of the Han emperors' tombs, implying that there was already close contact between the land of snow and the Central Plains at that time.

After one hour's walk from Grigum's tomb, we came to Yungdrung Dzin where there is another important Bonpo cultural relic. It is a stone stele commissioned by King Sanalek (804-815) in honour of the local Prince of Kongpo. Among other things, it states that Nyatri Tsenpo came down to earth at Mount Lhari Gyanto, one of the three peaks of Mount Bonri. Usually the honour of having received the first king of Tibet is attributed to Mount Lhabab near Zêtang.

4. Small wooden ladders built at Zhingkham Dzeke for benevolent spirits and bones of sacrificed animals

5. The wind carries the prayers printed on the prayer streamers to the gods.

6. The hanging stones at Dhigpa Dhotak, the last place for purification on the Bonri khora

A Steep Ascent to Bonri

We continued our khora in an anti-clockwise direction, typical for Bonpo, and met several pious pilgrims, who covered the whole distance of 60 kilometres by continuously prostrating themselves. This devotion becomes a real ordeal during the steep ascent from Menri Village at an altitude of 2,900 metres to the Bonri Pass at 4,530 metres. The 1,600-metre ascent is also tough for normal pilgrims. Contrary to the much higher khora around Mount

Kailash, the path around Bonri is so steep and slippery that no animal, neither horse nor yak, can handle it, and everybody has to walk and carry his or her own luggage. For this reason there are a few professional pilgrims, who perform the khora for a modest sum of 20 to 30 yuan on behalf of those people who cannot make it, such as the elderly or those who are ill.

Together with some 20 other pilgrims the three of us left Menri at five o'clock in the morning for we wanted to make the ascent in one stretch and reach Tagdrosa Gonpa on the northern side of Bonri before dawn. Fortunately it was only drizzling and not snowing. The path would become impassable during and after heavy snow.

It's impossible to get lost on Bonri because the whole path is lined with long prayer streamers. They look like the prayer streamers traditionally placed in southeastern Tibet along the way from the house of a deceased person to the location of cremation or sky burial. They reminded us that the khora is also an act of inner purification.

On the way to Tagdrosa Gonpa we passed four holy places, where pilgrims can leave their bad *karma*, or sins, behind them. The first one is a large tree named Senbon Dhungshing. In the upper branches of the tree, I noticed, there are small coffins and children's toys — it is a graveyard for babies. People believe the spirits living near the tree will remove the sins a baby had accumulated in his previous life that had provoked its premature death. Once freed from this bad *karma* the deceased child would find a happier future reincarnation. There are also many human teeth stuck into the bark of the tree. People believe that painful teeth are caused by their sins, and that by leaving their rotten teeth in the tree bark they also get rid of their sins.

Zhingkham Dzeke is the second of such purifying places. Here, small wooden branches cut with several notches are leaning against the rock. They symbolise heavenly ladders onto which benevolent spirits may carry the sins of the pilgrims away. The third location is a huge stone inscribed with a Bonpo mantra called Dhigpa Pabsa. Pilgrims "rub" off their sins by pressing their back onto the stone.

Heavy sinners, who are still burdened with a bad *karma* after having crossed the pass, find their last chance for purification at Dhigpa Dhotak, the "place of the hanging stones". Here pilgrims bind pebbles, symbols of their remaining sins, with woollen threads onto the branches of some bushes. Now they have left their last sins behind and proceed happily to the starting point, Ningchi. Like them we ended our khora by visiting the small Kushuk Gonpa and its 2,000-year-old huge juniper tree, which was allegedly planted by Tonpa Shenrab.

Lake Dangra, Abode of the Female Divinity Ganjoma

The khora around Lake Dangra is easier but much longer than that around Mount Bonri. The lake is kidney-shaped and the circumambulation of its 850 square kilometre expanse takes eight to 10 days. Except a few gonpas, small villages and nomadic camps along the eastern shore of the lake, where the pilgrim may find shelter and food, the area around the rest of the lake is totally devoid of any inhabitants. For this reason Pasang organised two yaks to carry our tent, food and cooking equipment.

Dangra is 4,530 metres

1. The numerous terraces above the shore of Lake Dangra indicate that the water surface has shrunk dramatically over the last few centuries.
2. A lonely blue poppy in the Qiangtang Plateau at 4,700 metres above sea level
3. Nomads in Qiangtang milking their sheep

4. A Bonpo mantra inscribed on a rock by Lake Dangra
5. Wild donkeys, called khyang in Tibetan, roaming around in Qiangtang

above sea level and is located in central Qiangtang, about 200 kilometres north of Sangsang. The dirt track ends at Tsome, but it is possible to drive on the grassland till Qumigxung, situated on the eastern shore of Lake Dangra. Since there is virtually no traffic northbound from Sangsang, we had to rent a jeep to drive us to Qumigxung and to pick us up again two weeks later.

We left Qumigxung and its small Bonpo gonpa with our two yaks under brilliant sunshine, heading north in order to perform the khora in the proper anti-clockwise direction. Along all the edges of the lake I noticed about 20 terraces stacked up one upon another. This is a sign that the lake was previously much larger. Pemba, a nomad whom we met in his black tent made out of yak wool, confirmed that Lake Dangra is still shrinking today. "The water of the lake has become increasingly salty in the last 20 years or more, and the lake has not frozen over since 1985," he said. This is probably due to a reduced inflow of fresh water from the surrounding rivers and stronger evaporation, and the increased salt content prevents the water from freezing.

On our way to U Wun Gonpa we passed the ruins of Qumigxung Dropo, which was once upon a time a huge fortress controlling the trade route along Lake Dangra. While this area is quite deserted today, it was much more wealthy about 1,400 years ago. In those times it belonged to the kingdom of Shang Shung and was called Middle Shang Shung. Old Tibetan chronicles say that Ligmirhya, the last king of Shang Shung, was killed near Qumigxung Dropo in 644 by the Tubo king Songtsan Gambo. He was betrayed by his own wife Semarkar, who was a sister of the victorious Tubo king.

The Tubo king Songtsan Gambo and the Shang Shung king Ligmirhya were related by marriage. Songtsan Gambo had married Ligmirhya's sister Lithigmen and Ligmirhya had married Songtsan Gambo's sister Semarkar. An old Tibetan manuscript from the 10th century found in Dunhuang claims that Semarkar was jealous of Ligmirhya's favourite wife and therefore searched for revenge. When she heard that her husband would soon travel to the Dangra area with only a small escort, she sent her brother a coded message. Songtsan Gambo dispatched an army and ambushed the king of Shang Shung at a place called Cave of the Golden Shell. Thus the Tubo king defeated Shang Shung and united Tibet.

U Wun Gonpa is also a Bon place. It is nestled against the huge cliffs which fall into the lake like an eagle's eyes. One of its monks explained the importance of Lake Dangra for the Bonpo: "Lake Dangra is the abode of the female Bonpo deity Ganjoma. At the southern end of the lake is Mount Targo, the seat of the male mountain god Targo Nomer. According to our traditions Ganjoma and Targo Nomer are the mythical

ancestors of the local people." Then the friendly monk showed us the monastery. The meditation hall is most impressive. It is located in a natural cave lying deep inside the cliffs and the altar is cut out of the rock.

Khyung Dzong, which, in Tibetan means "fortress of the eagle", is the next important Bonpo ruins we encountered on the khora. At this place the kings of Shang Shung had built a residence. After the banishment of Bon towards the end of the 8th century, the famous Bonpo teacher Drenpa Namkha hid the holy scriptures here for later posterity. And indeed, since the 12th century, several very old Bonpo manuscripts were found in Khyung Dzong. Tibetans call such old texts *terma*, meaning treasure, and their finders, *tertön*.

In Ombu we were the guests of the Bonpo lama Oezer. He told us that the old gonpa survived the "cultural revolution" because it was used in those turbulent times as a granary. The villagers and the neighbouring nomads used to store the barley they had either purchased from traders or grown themselves in the monastery. It is amazing, but barley indeed grows in the sparse fields surrounding Ombu at an altitude of 4,550 metres — almost as high as the highest mountain of my native country, Switzerland!

1. **About 30 Bonpo families live in Kysum by Lake Dangra**
2. **A boy playing with a bicycle tyre, which shows that modern means of transport have already reached Ombu, where no road yet exists**
3. **Mani wall and prayer streamers at Ombu**

For the next four days we followed the west shore of Lake Dangra. In this deserted region we did not meet any people but saw plenty of animals such as marmots, hares, Tibetan antelopes and wild donkeys called khyang. The latter were very shy although they are not hunted; so it was quite difficult to get them in my camera lens. One night we heard some hoarse cries from an unknown animal. Tashi, the driver of both yaks, thought they might have come from a hungry lynx.

At the end of our pilgrimage we left the lake at its southern end and headed for half a day southwards to Sêzhik Gonpa. Sêzhik is the oldest Bonpo monastery in the region and was founded at the beginning of the 15th century. It is situated at an altitude of 4,650 metres on the eastern slopes of Mount Targo, whose 16 ice-covered peaks tower over the monastery. For religious reasons it is forbidden to climb the 6,450-metre-high mountain, the same as for Mount Kailash in

Ngari. Although the shiny peaks were very alluring and their ascent did not look too demanding, I accepted this restriction. So, instead of trying my luck climbing Mount Targo, I spent two days in Sêzhik Gonpa.

4. This woman farmer of Kysum is in charge of a few small barley fields while her husband tends their yaks and sheep.
5. The author and the Bonpo lama Tenzing
6. A Bonpo lama holding a wooden board with a Bonpo mantra, at the top of Bonri Pass

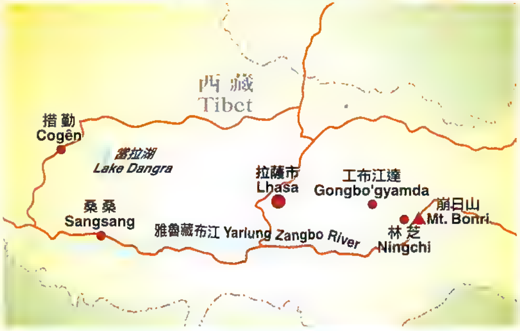
The walls of the prayer rooms at Sêzhik are covered with wonderful new paintings of Bonpo deities and protectors. On one side work is still in progress and I was lucky to observe artists at work. They first sketched the murals with a pencil and then applied the colours. On my last evening at Sêzhik the abbot showed me an oblong piece of paper with a strange-looking hand-written text on it. He explained that this is not Tibetan script but Shang Shung, the script used in the old Bonpo kingdom. Although the document is a recent copy of an older text lost many years ago I was very happy to see it, since Shang Shung texts are quite rare.

After having spent two weeks in the region of Dangra, we returned to Qumigxung to catch the jeep waiting for us. If we had been delayed, the jeep would have driven back to Sangsang and we might have had to spend the approaching winter in a gonpa at Lake Dangra!

The author, Dr. Christoph Baumer, is an independent scholar specialising in cultural themes of China, including Tibet, and Central Asia. As a result of his numerous travels in this area he has published several illustrated books and articles. His last book, published in German, is entitled "Bon: The Autochthonous Religion of Tibet".

Tips for the Traveller

Location Map of Mt. Bonri and Lake Dangra



Mount Bonri

Transport: There are daily buses for the two-day journey from Lhasa to Ningchi. The circumambulation around Mount Bonri by foot takes at least three days. If you want to visit the monasteries on the way, allow yourself about seven days. Pack animals can be rented in Ningchi or Menri. Take note that pack animals cannot cross the Bonri Pass, but have to make a detour along the eastern slopes of the mountain.

Lodging and food: Hotel and restaurants are available only in Ningchi. If you are alone you may find accommodation and food in the monasteries. Do not forget to leave an appropriate donation. Groups have to bring tents, food and cooking equipment with them.

Season: The best times are spring and autumn. In summer there is the risk of too much rain and in winter, heavy snow.

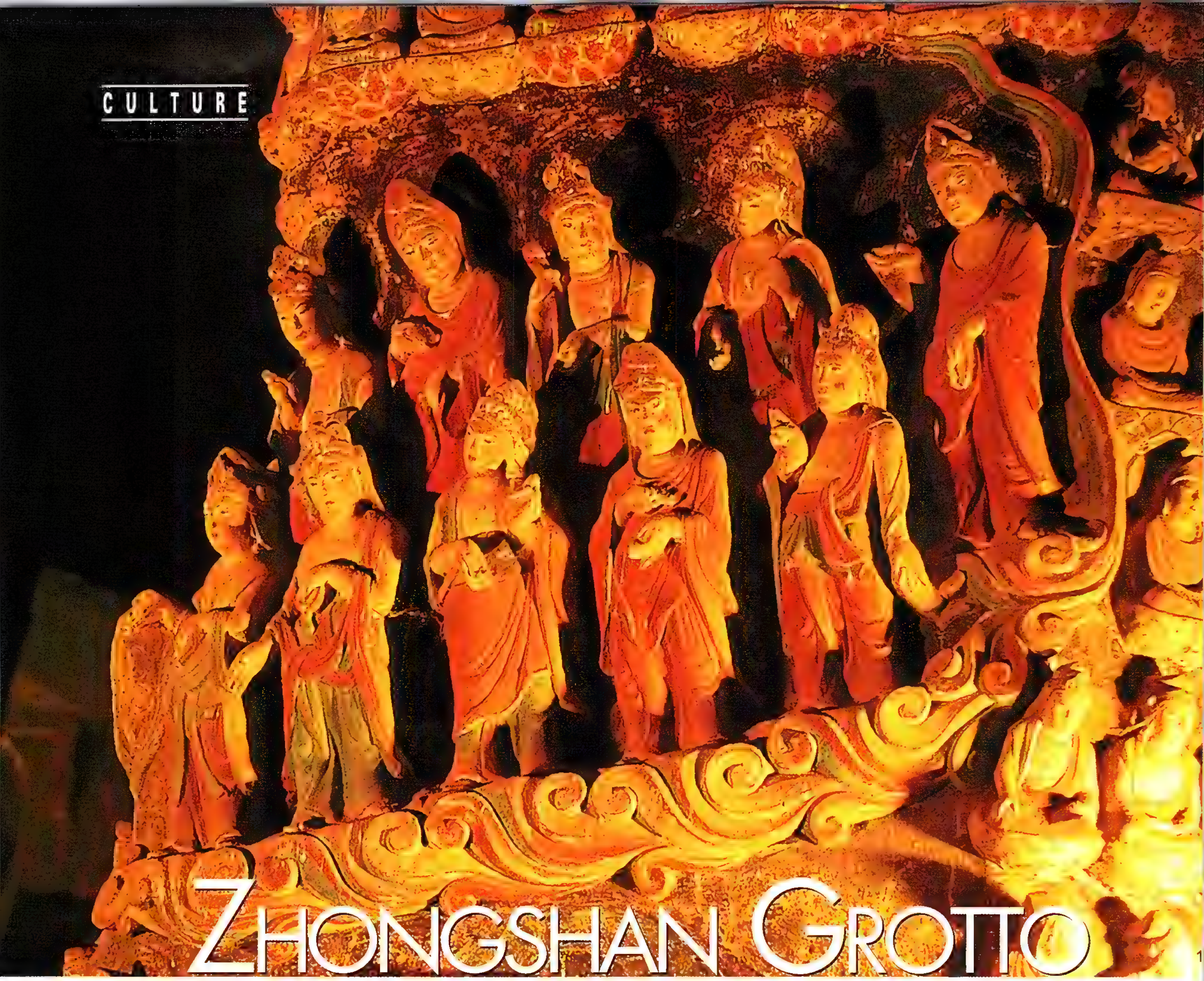
Lake Dangra

Transport: There are almost daily buses from Xigazê to Sangsang, but very little traffic to Tsome and none to Qumigxung. Either wait for a truck or rent a jeep in Sangsang. You can hire yaks in Tsome and Qumigxung.

Lodging and food: The only guesthouse is in Tsome. Since there are only a few people living on the eastern shore of the lake and none on the western, it is imperative to bring camping equipment and food along.

Season: The best time is from March to October. Winter is very cold. Take note that in late July and August it may be impossible to cross the Targo River at the southern end of Lake Dangra due to the thaw.

Note: Non-Chinese travellers need, for both trips, an Alien's Travel Permit issued by the Public Security Bureau in Lhasa.



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ZHONGSHAN GROTTO

AN ART TREASURE-TROVE IN NORTHERN SHAANXI

Photos & article by Feng Yingzhuang

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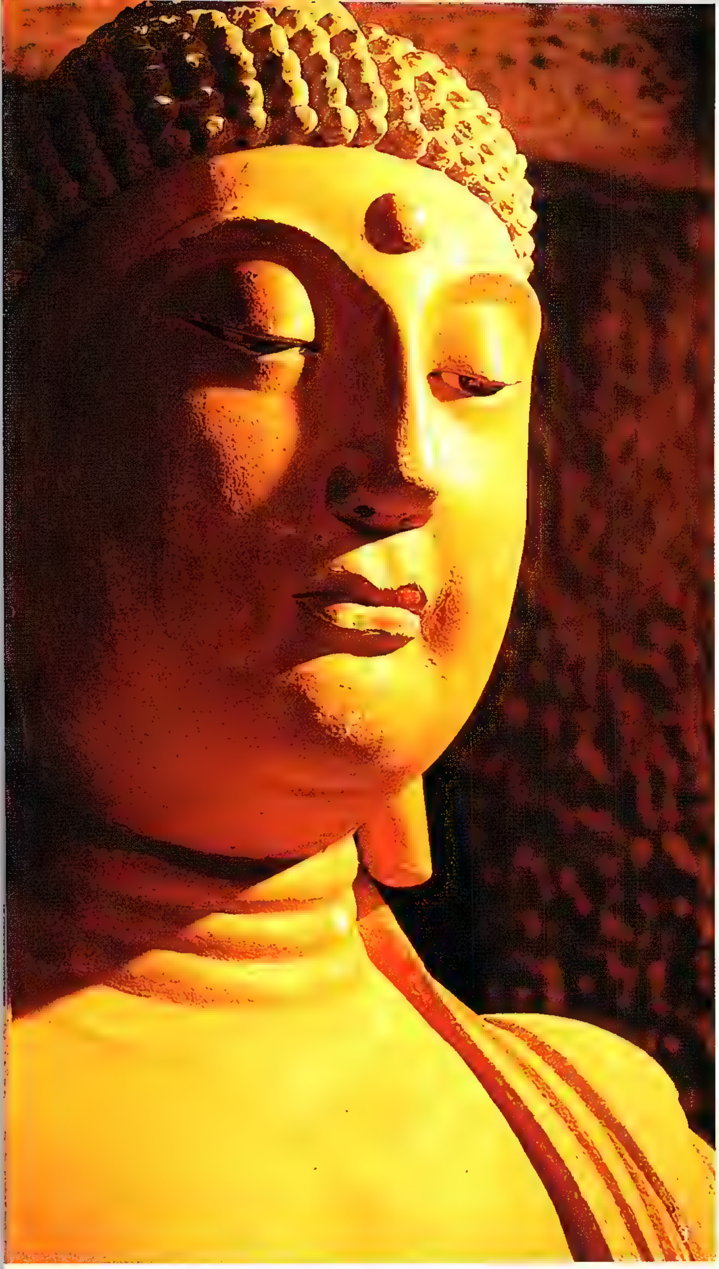
The Zhongshan Grotto is located at the southern foot of the Zhongshan Mountain in Anding Town, 15 kilometres west of the county seat of Zichang, Shaanxi Province. The grotto and the Buddhist images in it were first cut in 1067, during the reign of Song-dynasty Emperor Yingzong. New Buddhist images were added and existing ones repaired during the later dynasties of the Yuan, Ming and Qing.

The grotto is rectangular in shape and its flat ceiling is decorated with a design of the Eight Trigrams. The four walls and eight pillars supporting the roof are carved with thousands of small Buddhist images. On the central platform are the 3.54-metre-tall stone statues of the Buddha of the Present, Past and Future. The front of the platform has carved images of Bodhisattva Manjusri seated on a lion and Bodhisattva Samantabhadra on a white elephant, representing the Buddha's



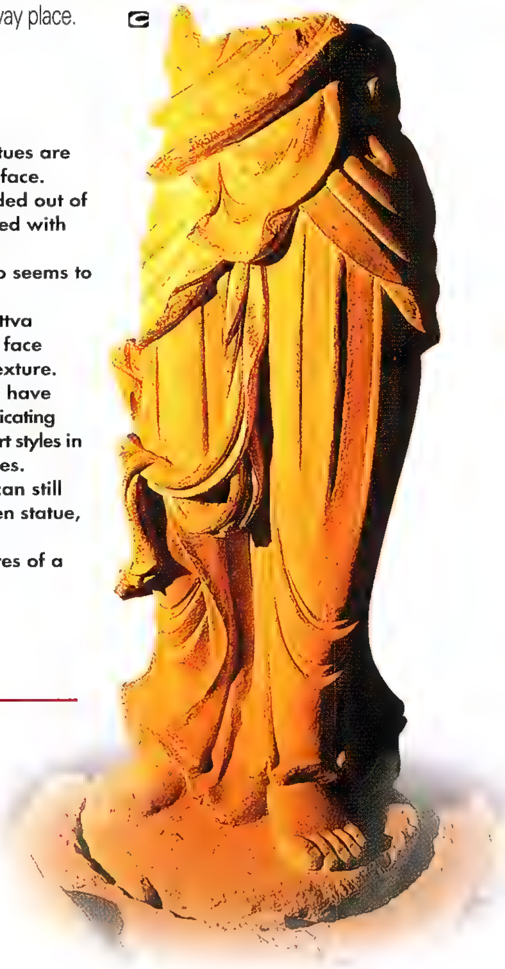
wisdom and compassion in action respectively. The Buddha sits cross-legged on a lotus-flower seat, which is narrowed in the middle and supported by a pair of powerful guardians carved below the seat.

There is also a Dharma-guarding lion scratching its neck with a hind paw. This vivid sculpture conveys such a strong sense of motion that it seems about to come to life at any moment. It echoes the Dharma-guarding lion under the seat of Kasyapa Buddha but is different in its gesture. Standing on both sides of the Buddha are his two disciples, Kasyapa, the senior disciple, and Ananda, his junior disciple, on lotus pedestals.

Also carved on the side of the platform are three images of Bodhisattva Guanyin, one standing and two seated. They are finely sculptured with coronas on their heads and long skirts.

The eight square stone columns on the platform that support the ceiling, each five metres in height, were hewn out from the cliffs when the grotto was being dug. On each of the four sides of the columns are small Buddhist images carved in relief in small niches. What is praiseworthy is that all the sculptures, both those in relief and those completely rounded out of the cliff, form a natural whole with the mountain itself.

Some experts believe that the historical and artistic value of the Zhongshan Grotto is on the same level with China's most famous Buddhist grottoes, namely, Yungang in Datong, Shanxi; Longmen in Luoyang, Henan; and Maijishan and Dunhuang in Gansu. It has not attracted much attention so far because it is smaller in scale and located in an out-of-the-way place.



1. **Large and small statues are carved into the cliff face. Even the ones rounded out of the cliff are connected with the mountain.**
2. **Image of a god who seems to have come to life**
3. **The female Bodhisattva has a well-rounded face and skin of a fine texture.**
4. **Some of the images have Western features, indicating the blend of different art styles in Zhongshan sculptures.**
5. **The sculptor's skill can still be seen in the broken statue, which displays the characteristic features of a female body.**

Tips for the Traveller

There are regular early-morning flights from Xi'an, capital of Shaanxi, to Yan'an in northern Shaanxi every Thursday. Trains run daily between Xi'+an and Yan'an, from where buses leave daily for Yulin, passing by Zichang. The Zhongshan Grotto is 15 kilometres from Zichang, where taxis and motor-tricycles are available for hire.

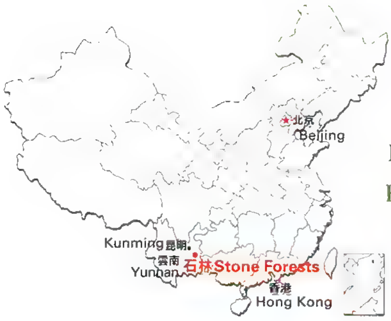
Opening time: 9:00-17:00.

PANORAMA OF THE STONE FORESTS

The Shilin Yi Autonomous County in Yunnan Province was originally called Lunan. In the Yi language, "lunan" means black stones. Within the county, karst stone peaks and pillars form forests that spread over 1,000 square kilometres. Thus the county's name became Shilin, which means stone forest.

The Shilin (Stone Forest) Scenic Area, also a nature reserve, covers an area of 100 square kilometres. Most of the jagged limestone pinnacles have been split by rainwater and eroded into fanciful forms. Together with tranquil beautiful lakes, unfathomable deep caves and magnificent waterfalls, the pinnacles form strange, fantastic and beautiful scenes beyond the imagination.

The Stone Forest Scenic Area is divided into eight major areas: the Stone Forests, Zhiyun Cave, Long Lake, Naigu Stone Forest (Black-Pine Cliff), Great Folding Waterfall, Fairy Lake, Strange-Wind Cave and Moon Lake. There are also many nameless stone forests scattered in the mountains, fields and villages, which appear more primeval and desolate.



The Greater Stone Forest

Included in this scenic area are scenic spots such as the Greater Stone Forest, Lesser Stone Forest, Bushao Mountain, Lizi Garden and Wannian Lingzhi.

The Greater Stone Forest is about 120 kilometres southeast of Yunnan's capital, Kunming. Huge grey stone crags stand upright in sharp relief like a forest. The largest limestone pillar is more than 40 metres high. The Lotus Peak, the Sword Peak Pond and the Rhinoceros Looking at the Moon are the typical scenic spots, while the Vista Pavilion, a three-storey structure built on top of a peak, is the best place for a view of the sea of stone forests.

Opened in 1931, it was the first of many to open to tourists. Walking into some areas of this dense basin-like forest of stone pillars, your way will be blocked by a towering peak every few steps. First-time visitors to this labyrinth may lose their way without a guide.

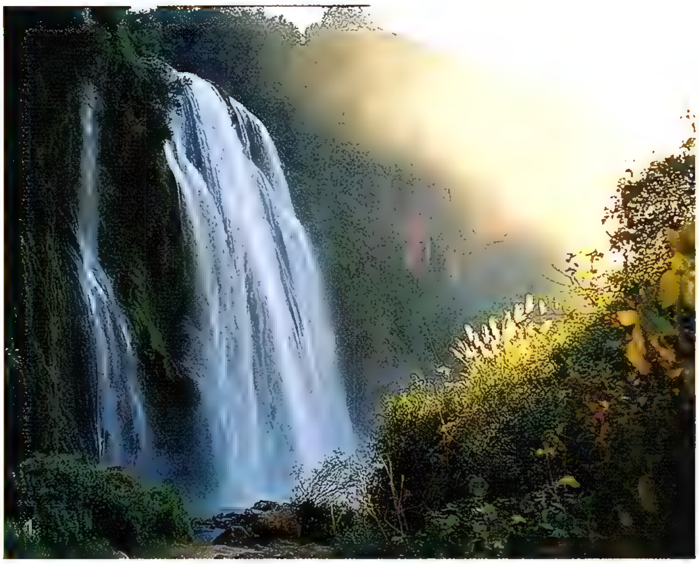
The Outer Stone Forest, which surrounds part of the Greater and Lesser stone forests, is more barren and primitive, but quite different. On top of the hill where the Wannian (10,000-Year) Lingzhi is located are some strange rocks that have been weathered to the extreme.

Naigu Stone Forest

Another stone forest, Naigu, about 10 kilometres from Greater Stone Forest, was developed in 1985. Though discovered later than the Greater Stone Forest, Naigu is actually older in geological terms than the former. Naigu means "ancient and dark" in the language of the local Yi people. Its stone peaks are jet-black, in contrast to the grey peaks of the Greater Stone Forest, and they tower over the hilly and primitive area. As well, the peaks in this forest are more crude and wild in their shapes. Closely connected pillars resemble strongly fortified ancient castles, while the lone pinnacles seem like giant petrified cactuses.

Naigu Stone Forest, also called Black-Pine Cliff, covers an area of eight square kilometres, and includes spots of interest

1. There are many stone forests outside the scenic area. (by Li Zhixiong)
2. The Stone Forest Lake (by Shi Baoxiu)
3. Sani people gathering to celebrate the Torch Festival (by Yang Xinmin)
4. A scene of the Stone Forest in Lunan (by Shi Baoxiu)



such as the White Cloud Lake and Cave, Ancient Battlefield and the Butterfly Lovers.

Long Lake

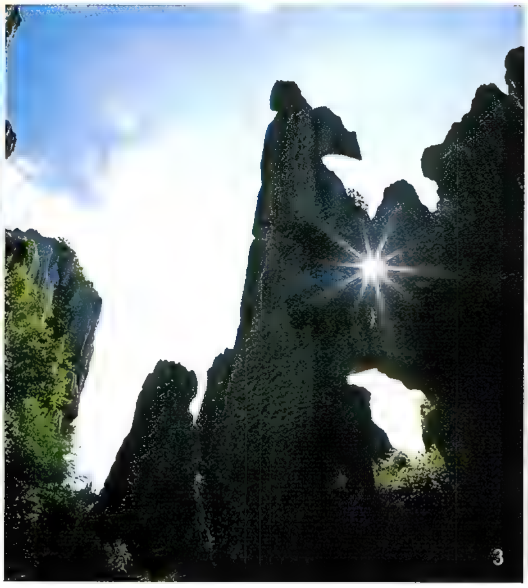
Long Lake is located in Weize Village, 26 kilometres away from the Stone Forests and 15 kilometres from the county seat, Lunan. At 1,907 metres above sea level and surrounded by undulating mountains, the lake is five kilometres in circumference, 300 metres wide and has an average water depth of 24 metres. Its shape resembles the slim body of a young girl. Folk legend has it that Long Lake is the homeland of Ashima, the heroine of a love story of the Sani people, a branch of the Yi ethnic group. In the middle of the lake there are four islets, which, overgrown with woods and covered by jagged rocks, seem to drift along the waves of the clear blue water. In the dry season, people can wade to the islets to pick wild fruits and flowers.

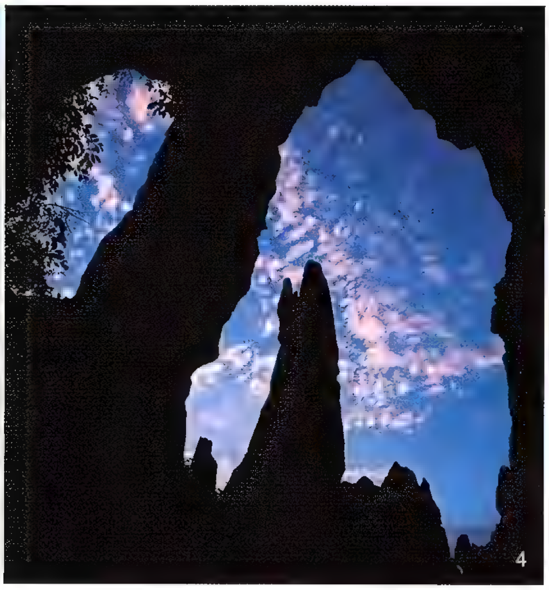
Visitors can take bamboo rafts to drift around on the Long Lake, or go fishing, or make a climb to enjoy the beautiful scenery of the lake and its surrounding mountains. There are also campsites for overnight stays, provided with song and dance performances by the Yi people and the Torch Festival program.

Moon Lake

The Moon Lake is located in Yaobaoshan Village, 12 kilometres away from the Stone Forests. This 1,906-metre-high lake, shaped like a crescent moon, is six kilometres in circumference and 1,500 metres wide. It is the largest among the lakes left by faults on the plateau. Though not deep, the lake's vast waters teem with fish. Many fossils of corals, snails and clams are hidden in the lakeside rocks.

On the south bank of the Moon Lake are hills of calcareous rocks, some of which appear to be sprouting up from the earth like new bamboo shoots. On the north bank is grassland, and on the east bank are undulating hills and lush green woods dotted with beautiful hamlets of the Yi people. Pines, cypresses and reeds grow on the hilly banks of the lake.





The Great Folding Waterfall

The Dadieshui (Great Folding Waterfall), in Banqiao Township 15 kilometres from the county seat, Lunan, drops down 90 metres over a 50-metre-wide spread, making it both higher and wider than the famous Huangguoshu Waterfalls in Guizhou Province. Huge streams of water fall over a sheer cliff down into a deep pool, giving off spray several metres high and creating rainbows. On a bright day after rain, marvellous twin rainbows appear above and beneath the waterfall. During summer and autumn when there is plentiful rain, the waterfall becomes a large sheet 90 metres wide.

Visitors can ride the new cableway or climb the cliff's stone steps to the viewing platform halfway up the mountain for a magnificent view of the waterfall.

Around the Great Folding Waterfall there are some other scenic spots such as the Small-Drip Waterfall, the Immortals Cave, and the Pearl Hot Spring with water of 24°C.

Strange-Wind Cave

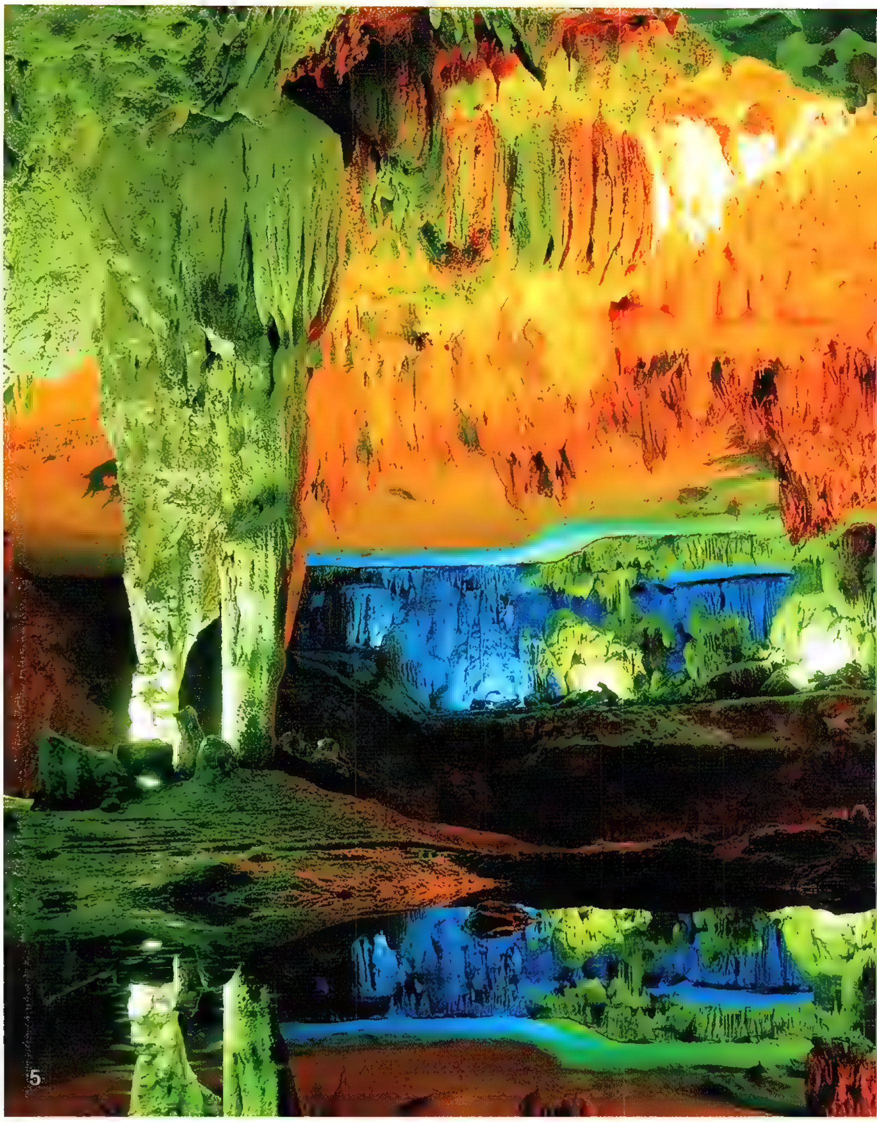
The Qifeng (Strange-Wind) Cave, found in a stone forest five kilometres northwest of the Stone Forests, is the strangest of the caves in Shilin County — a cave that can "breathe". With a diameter of only about one metre, it produces a sound, which is like the breathing of an old ox in the rainy season. If anything such as mud were used to seal the mouth of the cave, the strong wind inside would blow it away easily. If wood is burned at the mouth, the wind propels the flames and smoke outwards, and then, about 10 minutes later, sucks the flames and smoke inside. The cave "breathes" from June to October.

Underground Karst Caves

Besides spectacular peaks, Shilin boasts a number of beautiful, underground karst caves as well. A group of such caves is located five kilometres east of the Stone Forests. Among them, the Zhiyun (Lingzhi Cloud) Cave, found in the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644), was the first to be discovered. It is full of splendid stalactites resemble hanging lamps, plants and floating clouds.

Opposite to Zhiyun Cave, across the road, is Dieyun (Folding Clouds) Cave, which is over 500 metres long, 19 metres wide and 17 metres high. The cave is appreciated for its exquisite stalactites.

The Jibailong (Worshipping White Dragon) Cave is two kilometres from the Zhiyun Cave, at the foot of a hill in Tianshengqiao Village. Since the cave was only opened to tourists 14 years ago, its limestone rocks are crystal clear, like white jade carvings.



The Tianshengqiao (Natural Bridge), formed by one solid piece of limestone, connects the two parts of the village separated by a small river. The 30-metre-long bridge is 20 metres wide and 25 metres high. Its thinnest part measures four metres. Visitors can walk along the highway for 200 metres from the Jibailong Cave to reach the Natural Bridge.

Translated by Xiong Zhenru

1. **The Dadieshui Waterfall**
2. **Walking through a labyrinth (by Shi Baoxiu)**
3. **The Strange-Wind Cave (by Yang Xinmin)**
4. **Caves of various shapes are found in the Stone Forests. (by Yang Xinmin)**
5. **The White Cloud Cave in Naigu Stone Forest (by Yang Xinmin)**

TIPS FOR THE TRAVELLER

Transport

To the Stone Forest Scenic Area:

With the newly completed Shilin Airport, the Nanning-Kunming Railway and a network of highways in the county, the Stone Forest Scenic Area is easily accessible. Buses leave regularly from Kunming's bus and railway stations for the 86-kilometre, one and a half-hour trip to the scenic area in Shilin County. One-day tours are widely available from hotels and tourist agencies in Kunming.

Four passenger trains from Kunming, Guangzhou, Nanning and Zhanjiang pass by the Shilin Railway Station. The luxury Shilin Express trains (Nos. 201/202) which leave Kunming and Shilin at 8:28 and 15:20 respectively, take only one hour and 27 minutes to reach the other terminal. There are also air-conditioned, high-speed trains (Nos. 203/204) running between Kunming and the Stone Forest. Check the notice board at the train station for any change of schedule.

A bonfire party

Around the Stone Forest Scenic Area:

Private vehicles and horse-drawn carriages are available for hire at the parking lot in the Stone Forest Scenic Area. Carriages cost 60 yuan per day and will follow your own itinerary. For trips of two days or more, the cost drops to 50 yuan per day. Vans charge 150-170 yuan per day for 4 people. A 15-person van charges 200-250 yuan per day.

There are regular Lunan County tourist buses going to scenic spots around the Stone Forests. For the Long Lake, take the bus marked Muzhuqing and Guishan, get off at Weize Village and walk one kilometre to the lake. To get to the Great Folding Waterfall, take the regular bus to Dake or Nanda villages, get off at Chakou and take a motor-tricycle to the fall. For the Moon Lake, take a regular bus to Xijekou and get off at Yuebaoshan Village, which is right beside the lake.

A Stone Forest hotel

Tours

The Stone Forest Travel Service organises tours, starting either from Kunming or the scenic area. Charges are higher if the tour starts in Kunming.

One-day tours usually include the Greater and Lesser stone forests and one other stop such as the Naigu Stone Forest and White Cloud Cave, Great Folding Waterfall or Long Lake. The fees generally include entrance admission, lunch, transport, guide fee and one-way cableway ticket at the Great Folding Waterfall.

Two-day tours generally include the Greater and Lesser stone forests, the Great Folding Waterfall, and the Naigu Stone Forest and White Cloud Cave. The fees cover the entrance admission, four meals, accommodation, transport, guide fee and one-way cableway ticket at the Great Folding Waterfall.

Accommodation

Shilin Grand Hotel *:** Located in the seat of Shilin County, about eight minutes' drive to the Stone Forest Scenic Area. Standard room: 120 yuan up. Western and Chinese foods, including Huaiyang, Guangdong and Yunnan local cuisine, are available. The hotel is equipped with a sauna. Tel: (871) 779 8888 Fax: (871) 779 4888

Shilin Summer Resort Hotel **: Located in the centre of the Stone Forest Scenic Area, with view of the stone forest. Standard room: 80 yuan up. The hotel is equipped with a bar, teahouse and sauna. Tel: (871) 771 1924 Fax: (871) 771 1918

Local handicrafts

Stone Forest Holiday Inn: Located on the bank of Shilin Lake, the hotel sits in a very quiet, beautiful setting. Standard room: 80 yuan up. Tel: (871) 771 0888 Fax: (871) 771 0588

Shilin Hotel **: This ethnic-style hotel is located on a small hill between the Greater and Lesser stone forests, and offers great views. Standard room: 70 yuan up. The hotel offers folk song and dance performances by the Yi people. Tel: (871) 771 1401 Fax: (871) 771 1414

Yunlin Hotel **: Located in the Stone Forest Scenic Area, the architecture in its south yard blends with natural hills. It offers various recreational facilities, local and Guangdong dishes, and song and dance performances by the Yi people. Standard room: 110 yuan up. Tel: (871) 771 1410 Fax: (871) 771 1409

Yinbo Hotel: Located by the side of Lufangtang Reservoir in the Stone Forest Scenic Area, the hotel is nestled in the mountains, facing the reservoir. Standard room: 60 yuan up. Tel: (871) 771 1427

There are plentiful small hotels and hostels in the scenic area.

Yi-Style Delicacies

The Sani branch of the Yi people of Shilin County have a bold and uninhibited character, and are very hospitable. They eat a lot of meat and drink wine from large bowls. Wine lovers can try the local wine in bamboo containers, bitter buckwheat wine and corn wine, while meat-eaters can taste the characteristic mutton hotpot.

In Shilin some of the dishes are closely related to the mountains and rivers of the region as well as the traditions of the Sani people. Shilin is particularly famous for its preserved bean curd.

Preserved Bean Curd: This delicious tofu dish has a history of over 200 years. It is prepared with the bean curd produced locally, using the pure, unpolluted water from the Bajiang River.

The Shilin Grand Hotel offers a unique, Yi-style bean curd banquet. This includes a variety of the 48 different kinds of tofu cooked with ingredients such as mushrooms, peppers, garlic, bullfrogs, prawns, ham, pork and carrots.

Salted Ribs: Every household in Shilin County pickles vegetables such as radish, cabbage, pepper and ginger. Sour, sweet or hot, they are all very appetizing. The Salted Ribs is a distinguished dish. The ribs are chopped into bits, then preserved for some time with salt, black pepper, ginger and garlic. When eaten, they are steamed or fried.

A food stall

Honeyed Buckwheat Cake: The fragrant and sweet, crisp buckwheat cake dipped in honey is a favourite snack of the local people.

Milk Cake: Fresh sheep milk is boiled and acidified into a mild cheese that is then pressed into squares and dried. It may be eaten raw, steamed, boiled, fried or braised, and is often served combined with ham or green beans.

Gifts and Souvenirs

Marine Fossils: The fossils on sale are mostly sea mussels, along with some coral, spiral shell, plankton and plant fossils. There are also souvenirs crafted from fossils. The price of one sea mussel fossil usually starts at 20 yuan, but with bargaining, it may sell for 10 yuan.

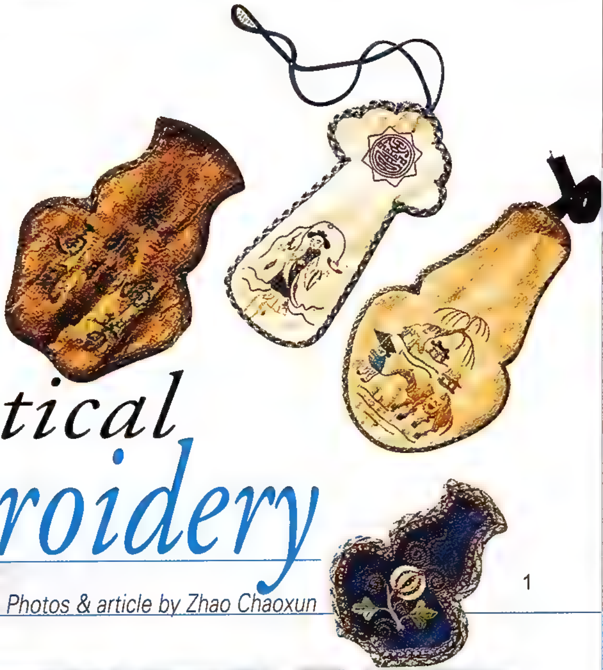
Sani Embroidery: This embroidery involves many different techniques, including cross-stitching, embroidering and patchwork. Embroidery is a criterion used to judge a woman's talent. Articles on sale on the Sani Embroidery Street on the bank of the Stone Forest Lake and in the shops include clothes, headwear, aprons, ties, shoes, children's caps, umbrella cases, table clothes, wall hangings, knapsacks and handbags. Handmade embroidered articles are more expensive than those made by machine.

Square Bamboo Baskets: Many of the local people's daily utilities are made of bamboo. The square bamboo basket is a typical bamboo product, which is practically carried by most local young girls. It can also make a good souvenir.

Stone Forest Postal Articles: The Stone Forest Post Office sells commemorative stamps, postcards and albums that can be stamped with the Stone Forest postmark.

Artistic and Practical Manchu Embroidery

Photos & article by Zhao Chaoxun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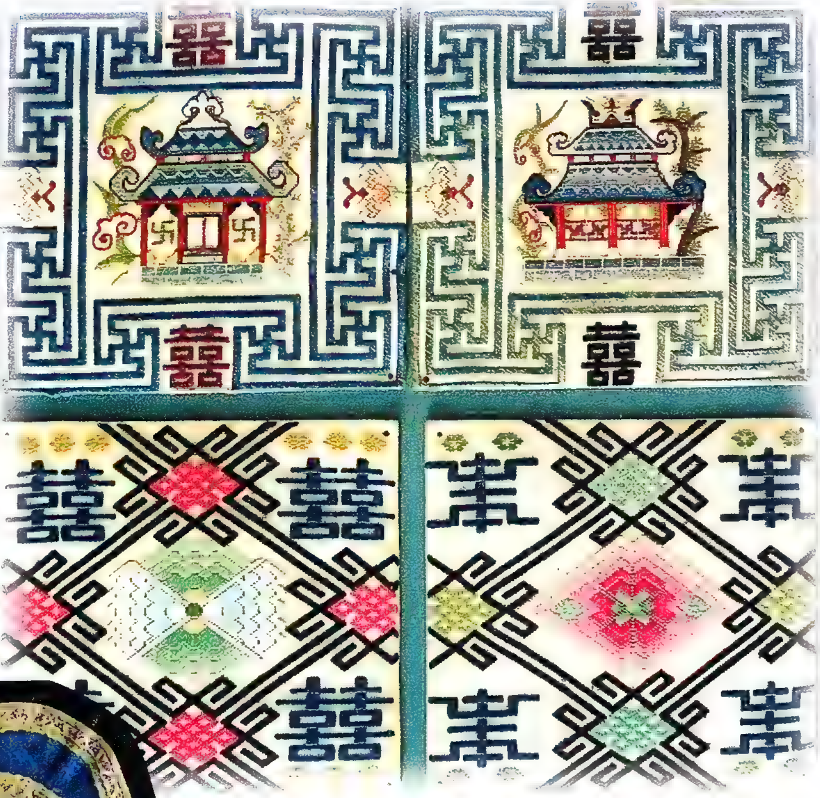
Embroidery, one of China's traditional folk handicrafts, first appeared in the Han Dynasty (206 B.C.-A.D. 220). Exquisite craftsmanship and beautiful colours emerged in the Tang Dynasty (618-907). Though later, Song-dynasty government embroidery workshops were established, folk embroidery continued to play a dominant role. In the Qing Dynasty (1644-1911) embroideries of Suzhou, Guangdong, Sichuan and Hunan became known as the "Four Famous Embroideries" in China.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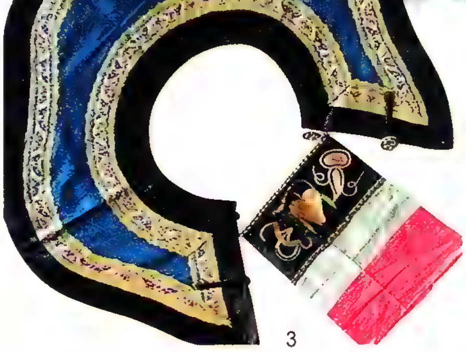
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The folk embroidery of the Manchus, an ethnic group living mainly in Northeast China, developed about 500 years ago in the Ming Dynasty. It originated from folk printed cloth, which came from folk paper-cuts. The Manchu embroidery has a northern character, and was gradually influenced by the Suzhou style of southern China. At the age eight or nine, Manchu girls were compelled to learn writing, painting and embroidery. When a marriage was arranged, the future mother-in-law would check the girl's embroidery talent, which was considered as important as her family status and personality. A rich dowry with refined embroidery always brought pride to the husband's family.

The Manchu folk embroidery appears on everyday articles. The embroidery on children's stomachers worn under laced bodices uses flowers, peaches and gourds as the theme, with motifs of bats and Buddhist swastikas on the borders, symbolising prosperity, longevity and happiness. Characters of legends and folk tales, flowers, birds and butterflies adorn the curtains. Pillow covers have intricate needlepoint patterns of birds, animals, flowers, fish, insects or legendary human figures with various motifs on their borders. Tinged with strong ethnic and regional features, the Manchu folk embroidery is in an exaggerated, rough and simple art style, and brightly coloured in sharply contrasting cool and warm tones.

Old pieces of Manchu folk embroidery retaining the original form and features can still be found in some farmers' houses in the Xiuyan Manchu Autonomous County in Liaoning Province.

Translated by Xiong Zhenru

1. Tobacco bags • 2. Pillow covers in needlepoint • 3. Collar and sleeve cuff

Learning Wushu in China

Photos & article by Steven Mah

A demonstration of the praying mantis boxing technique

Three years prior I had been in China, but this time my dream of studying *wushu*, or Chinese martial arts, in its land of origin became reality, with the help of the Strathcona Chinese Dance Company. The company had asked me to join their tour in China and the International Youth Dance Festival held in Macao as a northern lion dancer that summer, while at the same time they arranged *wushu* training for me in Beijing.

The Office of Overseas Chinese Affairs of the State Council sent a small delegation to oversee our visit. Maggie Zhang, our official escort, was well-educated and spoke very fluent English. We stayed at the dormitories for foreign students in central Beijing just east of the Forbidden City, the former palace of the emperors. Unfortunately our lodgings were not as luxurious as theirs had been!

The whole company went to the China National Children's Centre, a centre established for development of children's interests in arts and sports. All children in China learn *wushu* as part of their physical education. They are taught the traditional foundations of *wushu* and they then chose a speciality. Some continue with the traditional style while others opt for the contemporary one. At the centre I met Li Zhongming who taught there regularly. He spoke little English, but fortunately Maggie performed brilliantly as translator.

Coach Li discussed various forms of *wushu* and offered to teach me the one he knew. It was not what I had originally planned to learn but he felt I would benefit from learning this preying mantis style. We agreed to his fees of 200 yuan per day. Coach Li then took us to the centre's theatre to watch an array of performances, including *wushu*, opera and China's other performing arts.

The next morning I woke up well before sunrise, anticipating the start of my dream. I remember our lodgings well — a muggy humid aroma, poorly lit hallways, communal washrooms with squat toilets. Hot water was at a premium and those who missed "shower call" had to brave surprisingly cold water. I ventured out into the courtyard to do some stretching and warm-up exercises and heard the tranquil songs of the birds and felt the intensifying heat. Our daily breakfast was simple and consisted of congee, steamed bread, salted peanuts and fried rolls with meat filling. Ironically I felt healthier and stronger than I did with my typical Western breakfast.

Every day I went to the Children's Centre. The complex is one of the most modern facilities in the country, with the best teachers residing there during school months. It is unlike any training hall or gymnasium in Canada. There are two competition-size *wushu* mats with full length mirrors panelling one wall, trampolines and apparatus for gymnastics, and a swimming pool in an adjoining building. The ceilings are incredibly high and the space is open and unobstructed, perfect for long weapons play. The only drawback was that the air conditioning was turned off since the complex was not usually used in summer. Thus my personal training hall became my personal sauna.

The Yang-style Taiji had to be learned first and that took me one day. Learning fast was essential as time was limited. It seemed easy with a good teacher and six hours of private lessons, though some credit must go to my former instructor in Canada who taught me a similar style of Taiji. In the following days I learned the preying mantis style and the Taiji sword, Coach Li's chosen style and weapon. The fundamentals of learning martial arts are the same: each movement has a theoretical as well as artistic component; each movement has a purpose; and each style is distinct but has the same underlying principle whether traditional or contemporary. With this in mind I was able to grasp the message without needing to know much of the language.

Though exhausted much of the time, I ventured out in the evenings with other team members to some local street markets, which sold all types of consumer goods and artefacts from China's imperial past and heritage. Hand-crafted metal wares and wall scrolls could be purchased alongside jade sculptures and pendants. Among the most fascinating of commodities were the ancient weapons and swords, some four feet in length, remnants of imperial armies. I considered them but the logistics of transporting them home quashed that idea.

My stay in Beijing didn't consist entirely of schooling. On the weekends, tours were arranged, and our visits to the Forbidden City, Ming Tombs and the Great Wall were some of the highlights for me.

The author giving *wushu* instruction to member of the dance troupe

Members of the group seizing every opportunity to take photos (by Lu Jin)

Editor's Note: Several members of our Readers' Photography Group mentioned that, by joining in the group's trip to Sichuan, they had learned a lot. Some asked if they could possibly do a story collectively by supplying both the articles and pictures. We felt this novel suggestion was good, but reserved the right to edit and choose according to our standards. Surprisingly, many of the pictures are taken at unique angles, and the vivid descriptions of their personal experiences and feelings are wonderful. Here are some of them.

Into the Great Nature

Photos & article by the Readers' Photography Group

'Singing Folk Songs' at 4,000 Metres

From Wolong to the Siguniang (Four Maidens) Mountain, we had to go over the 4,000-metre-high Balang Mountain. On this long journey we had to stop somewhere by the road to relieve ourselves, particularly frequently due to the cold. Rather than be embarrassed by stating the obvious, someone gave it a beautiful term, "to sing a folk song", and this became our euphemism. Coming to the mountain pass at 4,000 metres, we again demanded the driver to stop. I wondered if the others' requests were deliberate like mine — just to see what "singing folk songs" was like at such a high altitude.

The driver chose a place and stopped. Luckily for us, the fog was very heavy and visibility only about eight metres. The men and women went to opposite ends of the bus. If you ask me how I felt, the answer is simply "in a hurry", yet you couldn't be quick even if you wanted to. I don't know whether it was the cold weather or the low pressure of the high altitude, but our bodies responded very slowly. *(Article by Xie Yingyi)*

Unforgettable Starry Sky

The first night in Rilong Town, we left our hotel and walked along a street in the small town with only a few lights.

Autumn at the foot of Siguniang Mountain (by Yi Yangdong)

The saddle on Balang Mountain at 4,000 metres is often covered by clouds and mist. (by Lin Longsheng)

Darkness nearly enveloped everything. The sky, however, was incredibly magnificent. I had never seen so many stars. Millions hung over the dark sky, and the Milky Way, formed by countless twinkling stars, ran across it like a huge piece of silk inlaid with numerous pearls. It was only then I came to understand the real meaning of the Milky Way. Perhaps, in everyone's life there is such a Milky Way and such a magnificent sky. Only by travelling afar to look for them can one cleanse his or her heart of the dust accumulated over the years and open his or her mind to inhale, feel and comprehend. In this way, you may discover the Milky Way in your heart and find yourself as pure as a babe.

At that moment I was shown the true and primitive beauty of life. *(Article by Chang Cheng)*

Tumbling Down the Mountain Slope

The beautiful, fresh green grass on a mountain slope in Changping Gully at the Siguniang Mountain seemed to be a fairyland. To be more intimate with nature, I decided to tumble down the slope.

I climbed to the top of the hill and lay flat. Facing the sky, I took a deep breath of the fresh air on the plateau. Down the slope, some of our group stood, ready to catch me if needed. I wrapped my head with both arms and rolled. Although the slope was not steep, tumbling down it was nevertheless very exciting. When I reached the bottom I felt quite dizzy. I stretched myself out on the grass and then felt extremely comfortable. How nice it is to leave the bustling city and embrace Mother Nature! *(Article by Xie Yingyi)*

Legs Frozen Stiff in an Icy Cold River

The view at the Kushu (Withered Trees) Shoal in Changping Gully was truly magnificent. There, a large tract of withered trees stood erect in the icy cold river.

Guozhuang dance party with the local Tibetans (by Chang Cheng)

Chang Cheng paddled across the river to us, carrying his shoes and socks. He looked miserable. To tease him, I threw one of his shoes to the other side. Unexpectedly, it fell into the water a foot from the bank. I felt very sorry, yet, at the same time, amused.

I could no longer refrain myself from testing the coldness of the water. Taking off our shoes and socks, Annie and I waded in. It was so cold that my legs instantly turned numb. Taking Annie's hand, I tried to escape by crossing the river quickly but the pebbles on the riverbed hurt my feet. Finally, on the other side we burst into laughter. We were two fools really, paddling in misery across the stream twice again until our calves turned numb like frozen bars. It was strange, however, that afterwards, we felt our steps were lighter than ever before. *(Article by Winnie)*

Thinking of Starting a Butter Tea Shop

On a cold night in Rilong Town, our whole group was invited inside a brightly lit house to warm up. Our host, Mr. Chen, has a shop for repairing auto tyres, but in addition he runs a small restaurant.

Mr. Chen is a Han Chinese and his wife is of the Tibetan ethnic group. Since the unique drink of the Tibetan people is butter tea, we requested this when asked our preferences. Mr. Chen and his family got busy, gathering the butter, tea, salt and other ingredients, then putting them all into a long bamboo pipe with boiled water. They thrust a piston-like object in and out the pipe rhythmically to prepare the tea. Seemingly easy and fun, some of us volunteered to have a try.

Unexpectedly, it was not at all easy. We made a laughing stock of ourselves at first, spilling a lot of butter tea all over our faces. Gradually, we learned the technique was to "pull up lightly and push down forcefully". When Mr. Chen gave me an 8 out of 10, I was very happy.

We all drank our tea from the bowls in a single gulp. It tasted particularly delicious because we had made a contribution to it ourselves. All together, I drank three bowls. One of the group said, "Back in Hong Kong, I will set up a butter tea shop myself. I am confident that I will make money." *(Article by Chang Cheng)*

Taking a risky break (by He Siyao)

Visiting a Tibetan Family

When I said I had come from Hong Kong, the Tibetan host asked about a place called Kowloon and then, if it was true that Hong Kong people were not allowed to smoke. I told him that such a restriction was only for public places.

I had never imagined that I, knowing little Mandarin, could talk with a Tibetan family. The sun shone through a hole in the stone, which served as the window and the sole source of light. A plateful of meat cooked with bean curd and red peppers, some plates of fresh vegetables and a huge bowl of rice were placed on a wooden table in the centre of the house. In addition, I was also served fragrant big-leaf tea. For me, it was a homely meal prepared with the most human kindness.

The host, in his 50s, sat on the wooden stool on my left. Tall and lean, he had very bright eyes. While talking with me, he kept urging his daughter, Zhuoma, who was around 20, to finish eating as quickly as possible to take me down the mountain. Zhuoma was attired in red Tibetan-style clothes and rubber shoes, and looked somewhat tired. Her younger brother, who was in his early teens, ate his meal quietly.

The family lived in the Changping Gully and tended animals and grew crops for subsistence. They also earned extra money by providing their horse to the tourists. The family was building a new stone house but it had no roof yet. It would take them another year before they could move into the new house.

I had met Zhuoma in the morning when I rode her big white horse to Kushu Shoal. Being quite large meant the others were reluctant to offer their small horses to me. When it was time to return, most horses that my friends had rode were rented by other travellers. In order to earn more money by making another trip during the intermission, the local people often do not keep their word to wait for their guests.

When I too, felt disappointed, I saw Zhuoma with her white horse in the distance, waving to me. Another traveller begged to rent the horse, but she did not budge and pointed at me. I appreciated her attitude.

Having travelled about halfway, she was stopped by a little boy running on to the road from the pasture. It was her younger brother, calling her to go home for lunch. She asked if I would like to go with her and have a rest. I was reluctant to leave after the short stay of 20 minutes at her home. *(Article by Zhang Yaru)*

A Picture Taken with Horse Dung

On the mountain slopes in Changping Gully, we often saw cow and horse dung. Mr. Huang challenged me to have a picture taken holding the horse dung, saying probably no-one else in the world had done that. I hesitated before challenging him to pick it up for me, thinking that this way I would not be alone doing this.

Mr. Huang chose a freshly excreted heap of horse dung. He picked it up carefully but dropped it into my hands heavily. It was very strange, however, because I didn't feel it was dirty at all. The dung did not have the least foul odour, only the smell of fresh grass. True, everything in nature has its own beauty.

Seeing what I had done, everyone in our group clicked their cameras, taking pictures of me holding the horse dung. Have you ever met one as foolish as I? *(Article by Xie Yingyi)*

Sitting on a Field Tractor

After lunch at Renshenguo Terrace in Shuangqiao (Twin-Bridge) Gully, our group scattered to take pictures. Our photography coach borrowed a small field tractor to find one person who had been left behind. Annie and I had never even seen a tractor, so we volunteered to go and try a ride on it.

We had just finished lunch and, since the tractor didn't have any shock absorbers, sitting on it really affected the digestive system. The ride was too bumpy and I had to stand up to bear the vibrations. The tractor laboured along the mountain trail, sending out gusts of black smoke in front, making it hard to open my eyes. Fearing that the exhaust might blacken my face, I had to squat down.

In our trip back, I boldly stood on the link between the tractor engine and the cart, which was only about a foot wide. It turned out to be very exciting — the golden trees, the grassland and snow-covered peaks all passed before my eyes. What a marvellous experience! *(Article by Winnie)*

A Hearty Party

The night we stayed in the Siguniang Mountain proved to be a rare experience for us. We were invited to a Tibetan family where we had our first experience of Guozhuang — a special dance party unique to the Tibetans.

A Tibetan mother and her son at Erdaohai (by Lao Haixan)

Our Tibetan hosts were very hospitable. With a bottle in his left hand and a cup in the right, the head of the house toasted each of us in turn. As he came to me, he simply said, "Bottoms up!" and tossed back all the liquor in one gulp. I hesitated, because, to be honest, I am not used to strong liquor. But, how could I let him down? Like a flame, the alcohol went down and immediately warmed me up in the cold night. I felt I became as brave and energetic as a heroine in some kungfu stories.

For men only (by Xie Yingyi)

All at once three tall and strong Tibetan boys and two beautiful girls arrived. They made us all hold hands in a circle to dance the Guozhuang with the music. Casting aside all worries and captivated by our Tibetan partners' hospitality, we danced heartily. The music suddenly stopped; everyone scattered, leaving only Annie and me in the circle. Ah, we were trapped. It turned out to be a game in which anyone left in the circle had to perform as a "fine". Annie and I had to sing half of the song *The Moon Represents My Heart*.

Just as the dance had finished, I stood against the wall to catch my breath. Suddenly, the Tibetan men grabbed my arms and legs and quickly threw me into air. This was the first time in my whole life that I was thrown so high. They did it three times, each time catching me just before I hit the ground. Later, I learned this is one way the Tibetans show their highest esteem to distinguished guests. My excitement reached its acme and I felt that all the hardships of the trip were worthwhile.

Finally, Annie and I danced with two Tibetan lads. Both good dancers, we easily followed their bold steps. The two lads were tall and handsome and I liked them. But when we jokingly invited them to Hong Kong with us, they refused. Perhaps they already had their sweethearts. *(Article by Winnie)*

Translated by Li Zhenguo

The charming water of Jiuzhaigou (by Li Rong)

Prize-Winning Photos of the Photography Group to

Siguniang Mountain, Miyaluo and Jiuzhaigou

Organised by *China Tourism*

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Life in a Qiang village (by Ye Zhizhao)

羌寨風情（葉志釗攝）

天梯（李融攝）

▲ The sky ladder (by Li Rong)

A prayer streamer at the foot of Siguniang Mountain (by Li Guangqiang) ▶

四姑娘山下的祝福（李廣鏘攝）

Last October, the readers' service department of this press, in co-operation with the Sichuan Young Photographers Association, organised an eight-day readers' photography tour to Siguniang Mountain, Miyaluo and Jiuzhaigou. Published here are only a few of the wonderful works by the 90 participants.

We sincerely invite our readers to join in future activities like this one.

I want to go out. (by Huang Xiuji) ▶

我想出去（黃秀姬攝）

Clouds on the Siguniang Mountain (by Yi Yangdong)

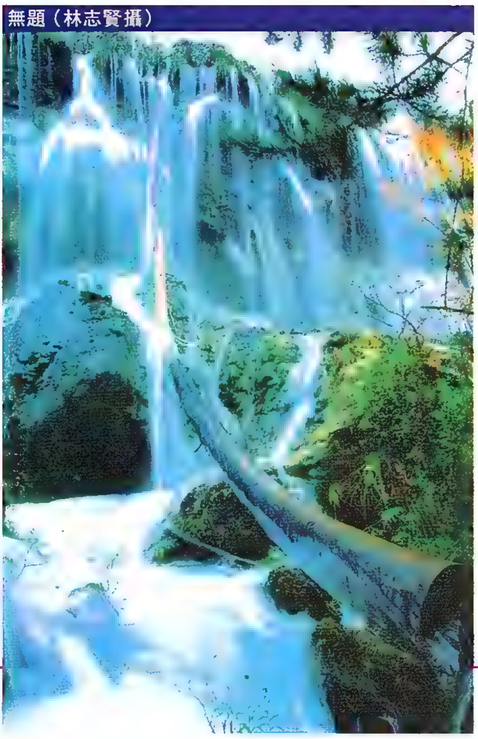
四姑娘山雲彩（易仰東攝）

牛棚子枯木（龐潤棠攝）

▲ Withered woods at Niupengzi (by Pang Runtang)

No subject (by Lin Zhixian)

無題（林志賢攝）



A senior woman prayer (by Peter Li) ▶

唸經老婦（Peter Li 攝）

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Hotels in Xinjiang

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	Holiday Inn Urümqi	****	168 Xinhua Rd. N.	830002	(991) 2818788	(991) 2817422
	Xinjiang Hotel World Plaza	****	2 Beijing Rd. S.	830011	(991) 3836360	(991) 3836399
	Xinjiang Electric Power Hotel	***	57 Minzhu Rd.	830002	(991) 2822911	(991) 2826031
	Islam Grand Hotel Urümqi	***	22 Zhongshan Rd.	830002	(991) 2811017	(991) 2811513
	Laiyuan Hotel	***	3 Jianshe Rd.	830002	(991) 2828368	(991) 2825109
	Xinjiang Hotel	**	107 Changjiang Rd.	830006	(991) 5852511	(991) 5811354
	Friendship Hotel	**	62 Yan'an Rd. N.	830001	(991) 2864222	(991) 2863573
	Overseas Chinese Hotel Urümqi	**	51 Xinhua Rd. S.	830001	(991) 2860793	(991) 2860622
	Kunlun Hotel	**	51 Youhao Rd. N.	830000	(991) 4840411	(991) 4840213
	Bogda Hotel	**	10 Guangming Rd.	830002	(991) 2823910	(991) 2815769
	Airport Hotel	**	Inside the international airport		(991) 3719511	
	Hongshan Hotel	*	108 Xinhua Rd. N.	830002	(991) 2816018	
	Xinjiang Sports Hotel	*	3 Renmin Rd.	830002	(991) 2825441	(991) 2828074
Turpan	Turpan Hotel	**	Qingnian Rd.	838000	(995) 8522025	(995) 8523262
	Turpan Oasis Hotel	**	41 Qingnian Rd.	838000	(995) 8522491	(995) 8522768
Yining	Yili Hotel	**	8 Yingbin Rd.	835000	(999) 8023126	(999) 8024964
	Yili Friendship Hotel	**	Stalin St.	835000	(999) 8023901	(999) 8024631
Kashi	Seman Hotel	**	Seman Rd.	844000	(998) 2822001	
	Kashgar Guest House	**	7 Tawuguzi Rd.	844000	(998) 2824679	
Korla	Bayinguoleng Hotel	***	Renmin Rd. E.	841000	(996) 2022248	(996) 2024007
	Bostan Hotel	*	Renmin Rd. W.	841000	(996) 2022007	
Aksu	Aksu Friendship Hotel	**	42 Yingbin Rd.	843000	(997) 2123200	
	Aksu Guest House	**	39 Xiaonan St.	843000	(997) 2123340	
Shihezi	Shihezi Guest House	**	Donghuan Rd.	832000	(993) 2012587	(993) 2012167
Hotan	Hotan Hotel	**	Pesitan Rd. S.	848000	(903) 2023563	
Kuytun	Kuytun Hotel	**	1 Tuanjie Rd. E.	833200	(992) 222525	(992) 221239

Flights to and from **Urümqi**

Route	Days	Dep.	Arr.	Flight
Beijing — Urümqi	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	1440	1850	XO9102
	2 4 6	1635	2020	XO9608
	3 6	1650	2100	CZ 329
	2	1825	2230	XO9602
	1 4 5 6 7	1915	2315	XO9104
	3 5 7	2110	0100	XO9312
Urümqi — Beijing	2 4 6	0805	1115	XO9607
	3 5 7	0815	1145	XO9311
	2	0855	1215	XO9601
	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	1005	1330	XO9101
	4 7	1125	1505	CZ 330
	1 4 5 6 7	1455	1825	XO9103
Chengdu — Urümqi	3 6	0805	1125	3U 901
	4	1320	1700	SZ4903
	1 4 5	1325	1705	XO9402
	6	1340	1700	SZ4903
	2 5 7	1740	2120	XO9406
	3 6	1935	2315	XO9518
Urümqi — Chengdu	1 4 5	0915	1235	XO9401
	3 6	0915	1245	XO9517
	2 5 7	0925	1240	XO9405
	3 6	1210	1520	3U 902
	4 6	1740	2040	SZ4904
Chongqing — Urümqi	3 6 7	0730	1210	SZ4941
	2 5	1130	1510	WH2913
	3 6	1140	1540	CZ8773
	1 4	1850	2250	XO9522
Urümqi — Chongqing	1 4	0815	1145	XO9521
	3 6 7	1250	1720	SZ4942
	2 5	1600	1920	WH2914
	3 6	1620	2020	CZ8774
Dalian — Urümqi	1	1550	2220	XO9604
Urümqi — Dalian	1	0855	1455	XO9603
Guangzhou — Urümqi	2 3 5 7	0855	1415	CZ3911
	1 3 4 5 7	1415	1935	XO9302
	2 6	1525	2200	XO9308
	3 5 7	1655	0100	XO9312
Urümqi — Guangzhou	3 5 7	0815	1555	XO9311
	1 3 4 5 7	0835	1315	XO9301
	2 6	0835	1445	XO9307
	2 3 5 7	1515	1945	CZ3912
Guilin — Urümqi	3 6	1600	2220	XO9306
Urümqi — Guilin	3 6	0925	1520	XO9305
Hong Kong — Urümqi	3	1600	2130	XO 782
Urümqi — Hong Kong	3	0945	1445	XO 781
Kunming — Urümqi	1 4	0950	1500	3Q4961
	2 5 7	1535	2120	XO9406
Urümqi — Kunming	2 5 7	0925	1450	XO9405
	1 4	1540	2040	3Q4962

Route	Days	Dep.	Arr.	Flight
Qingdao — Urümqi	1 4 6	1610	2235	XO9514
Urümqi — Qingdao	1 4 6	0935	1525	XO9513
Shanghai — Urümqi	1 3 4 6 7	1415	1930	XO9502
Urümqi — Shanghai	1 3 4 6 7	0845	1300	XO9501
Shenyang — Urümqi	3	0855	1530	CJ6465
	2 4 6	1435	2020	XO9608
	3 7	1540	2230	XO9606
Urümqi — Shenyang	2 4 6	0805	1330	XO9607
	3 7	0905	1500	XO9605
	3	1610	2200	CJ6466
Shenzhen — Urümqi	2 5	0850	1520	CZ3255
	1 4 6	1535	2230	XO9304
Urümqi — Shenzhen	1 4 6	0825	1445	XO9303
	2 5	1610	2205	CZ3256
Wuhan — Urümqi	4 7	0805	1225	CZ3995
	2 5	1105	1520	CZ3255
Urümqi — Wuhan	4 7	1315	1710	CZ3996
	2 5	1610	2005	CZ3256
Xiamen — Urümqi	6	0745	1430	MF8901
	2 5 7	1555	2300	XO9802
Urümqi — Xiamen	2 5 7	0825	1455	XO9801
	6	1515	2145	MF8902
Xi'an — Urümqi	1 3 7	0755	1115	WH2903
	2 4 6	0830	1150	WH2901
	1 4	1020	1340	SC 161
	6	1125	1430	MF8901
	2 4 6	1615	2230	XO9218
	3 5 7	1815	2155	XO9510
	2	1835	2200	XO9516
	3 6	1845	2220	XO9306
	1	1855	2220	XO9604
	2	1905	2225	XO9382
	1 4 6	1930	2250	XO9504
	2 5 7	1930	2300	XO9802
	1 3 5	2200	0140	XO9202
Urümqi — Xi'an	2 5 7	0825	1140	XO9801
	1	0855	1200	XO9603
	2	0915	1230	XO9515
	2 4 6	0920	1510	XO9217
	3 6	0925	1235	XO9305
	3 5 7	0935	1240	XO9509
	2	0935	1245	XO9381
	1 4 6	0945	1250	XO9503
	2 4 6	1250	1530	WH2902
	1 4	1420	1720	SC 162
	6	1515	1815	MF8902
	1 3 5	1800	2100	XO9201
	1 3 7	1810	2055	WH2904

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CJ = China Northern Airlines
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NEW HUNAN DISHES OF SHENNONG HOTEL

Photos & article by Shan Xiaogang

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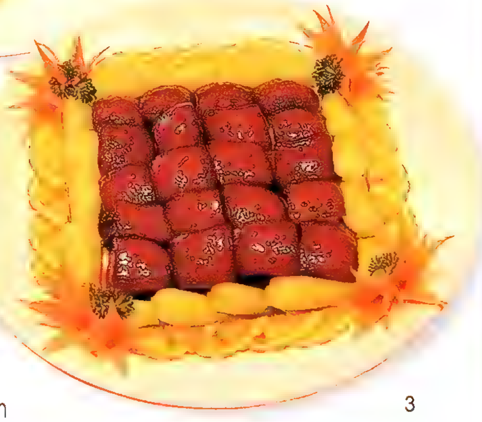


3

On a recent 10-day visit to the ancient city of Changsha, capital of Hunan Province in Central China, I tasted many dishes from restaurants big and small. Most impressive were the new dishes of Shennong Hotel, which looked so much like pieces of art works that I dared not pick them with chopsticks.

The Five-Colour Assortment is a cold dish showing the cuts, colours and flavours of Hunan food. Various kinds of cooked meat and vegetables, cut into fine pieces, are artfully arranged on an ancient-style porcelain plate. Newly created by the Shennong Hotel, Fragrant Fried Sesame Chicken is a very crisp and tender dish whose cooking method seems too complicated to describe in words. Mao Family Braised Pork has become famous because Mao Zedong loved to eat it. I had this Hunan dish both in Changsha and Shaoshan, but the Shennong Hotel's is the best. The cubes of braised pork resembling agate are a feast for the eyes, to say nothing of their taste. One of the hotel's traditional dishes is Steamed Fish Head with Peppers. The cooking requires proper technique. The chopped red peppers are fragrant and slightly sour and sweet, and the fish is tender and delicious. Marine ingredients such as prawns and scallops are combined quickly with broccoli and certain condiments into the delightful dish, Coiling Dragon Regards the Moon. Steamed Eel is a traditional dish cooked in a new style created by the Shennong Hotel. Traditionally the eel is steamed in a clay pot, which retains the tenderness of the meat. The Shennong dish has the eel steamed in a bamboo container, so it is not only tender but also has the delicate fragrance from the bamboo. A cold dish for the hot summer is the Preserved Hunan Lotus Seeds and Wax Gourd, an exquisitely carved gourd filled with delicate shrimps and lotus seeds. Steamed Young Doves is a famous central Hunan dish that is a good tonic for the brain and kidneys. With longan, litchi, dates, lotus seeds and Chinese wolfberries, it is a very nourishing and easily digestible dish.

Hunan-flavour light refreshments are also quite tasty. Panda Playing with Bamboo, made of sweetened dough mixed with spinach juice, is one example. ⊂

Translated by Xiong Zhenru

4

Tips for the Traveller

Shennong Hotel

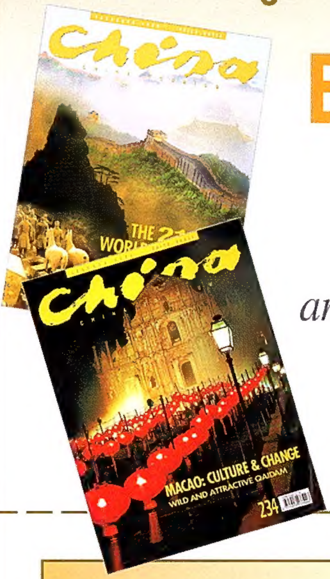
Address: 298 Furong Road South, Changsha, Hunan.

Transport: Taxi fares start at 8 yuan in Changsha. It costs about 10 yuan from the Changsha Railway Station to the hotel.

1. **The Steamed Eel dish in a new style of cooking which adds a delicate bamboo fragrance.**
2. **The Coiling Dragon Regards the Moon dish presents a fresh taste.**
3. **Mao Family Braised Pork with shiny "agate"cubes**
4. **Enjoying Hunan delicacies in a private room of the Shennong Hotel**

English Edition

C H I N A T O U R I S M



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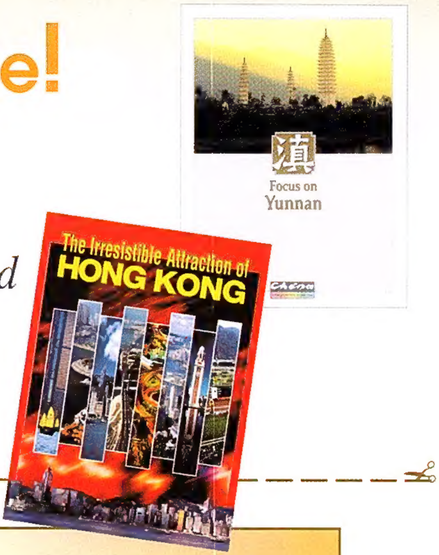

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NEXT ISSUE

HIGHLIGHTS OF ISSUE NO. 238

by Wang Dajun

- On the magnificent and expansive Qinghai-Tibetan Plateau there is a 2,000-kilometre zigzagging route which crosses 14 rivers, climbs over 21 mountains with an average height of over 4,000 metres and links up the two cities of **Lhasa and Chengdu**. This is the well-known **Sichuan-Tibetan Highway**. On the way travellers will be greeted not only with bewitching scenery, modest Tibetan people and rich ethnic culture, but at the same time with a severe climate, adverse conditions and unexpected dangers. This fascinating yet arduous travel route will be introduced in our Feature Story.

- **Rafting down the roaring Yellow River** is certainly a risky adventure. Yet this cradle of the Chinese civilisation always tempts bold explorers from near and afar. In the last summer of the 20th century, a group of university students formed an exploration team and spent a month drifting down the upper and middle sections of the Yellow River by a most primitive means of travel — sheepskin rafts. They started from Gansu's Lanzhou, passing the Loess Plateau, the Great Bend of the river, the Tengger Desert and the Ulan Buh Desert to arrive at Baotou in Inner Mongolia. Their hardships were finally rewarded with the joy of accomplishment.

- The nether world does not only exist in horror movies. We will bring you to **Xuzhou** in Jiangsu Province to open up the gate of Hell — the door leading to the imperial **Mausoleum of the Han Dynasty**. The location of the 2,000-year-old tomb deep within mammoth mountains, and its crisscrossing passages and complicated structure make it unusually gruesome. The story begins with the discovery of this underground palace....

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LANSHENG (GROUP) SHANGHAI MEDICINES & HEALTH PRODUCTS IMP. & EXP. CORP.

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總經理：蔣震偉
General Manager: Jiang Zhenwei

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Founded in January 1, 1986, the Shanghai Medicines & Health Products Import & Export Corporation is one of the biggest enterprises of its kind in China, and one of the country's top 500 companies in terms of import and export volumes.

The company joined the Shanghai Lansheng (Group) Corp. in September 1997, which enabled it to make greater progress in reforming its managerial system and finding more business opportunities.

The corporation is mainly involved in the import and export of pharmaceuticals and their preparations, intermediates, Chinese patent medicines, Chinese medicinal herbs, health products, medical instruments, hospital equipment, surgical dressings and other commodities. It also works as an agency for import and export business, and is involved in business of processing, compensation trade, joint venture and co-operative operations. The corporation has established business relations with companies in 130 countries and regions.

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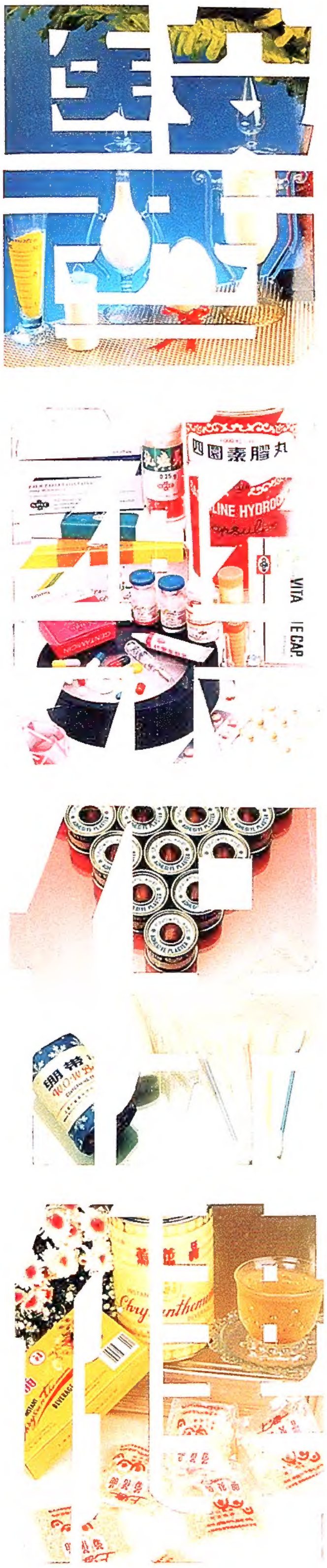

之源

Shanghai Hotel

上海賓館

HUATING GROUP

Reservation (Hong Kong):
Jinjiang Group (Hong Kong) International
Reservation Centre
Tel: (852) 2803 7189 2803 7270
Fax: (852) 2857 3963 2857 3971

Reservation (Shanghai):
Marketing and Sales Department, Shanghai Hotel
Tel: (86-21) 6248 7348 6248 0088-498
Fax: (86-21) 6248 1310

The 30-storey Shanghai Hotel located in downtown Shanghai is a modern hotel designed, constructed and managed entirely by local Chinese.

Shanghai Hotel has a total of 543 guestrooms categorised into single, double and executive rooms, and suites and deluxe suites. All of them are well equipped with remote control TV with satellite broadcasting from the United States, Japan, Hong Kong and Taiwan, IDD telephone, bar, hair dryer and TOTO bathroom facilities. Moreover, two bottles of mineral water are provided free daily.

Designed by the world-celebrated decorator Barbara, the European-style hotel lobby, 660 square metres large, is elegant and stylish. The 300-square-metre lobby lounge offers the guests a comfortable ambience of verdant vegetation and melodious music. For gourmets, they will be happy to find a wide range of cuisine offered by the hotel, which includes Chaozhou, Huaiyang, Shanghai and Japanese dishes.

The business centre is well-appointed, with conference rooms of various sizes and VIP rooms. The fitness centre is equipped with sauna and chess and billiards rooms, and a beauty parlour is available to serve the guests. The hotel is also equipped with a shopping mall and ticketing centre. It is an ideal place for business travellers to enjoy recreation and leisure activities at the same time.

Situated favourably in the vicinity of the prosperous Huaihai Road, Nanjing Road and Hengshan Road, Shanghai Hotel is only 6 kilometres from the railway station. It takes only 15 minutes travelling from the airport to the hotel along the Yan'an Road viaduct. The subway station is also within walking distance.

A business stopover in the metropolis, Shanghai Hotel welcomes you.

Discounted room rates (applicable for advanced booking only):

Standard room: US$50 Deluxe single room: US$60

Executive room: US$80 Deluxe suite: US$120

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